

Riches' definition most Bible study groups would claim to be contextual because "Groups would work through a series of questions that help them first to read the text closely and then to make links between it and their own experience" (475). J. Beutler (Germany and Italy) comments on the Johannine Epistles (553-58), drawing on parallels between modern Europe and ancient Ephesus and the Christian communities in both areas. C. Rowland (UK) comments on Revelation (559-70): "My perspective on Revelation is that of one who, like John, has found himself taken out into the wilderness to see afresh the world as it is privileged to see the pervasive and subtle ways in which the culture of Babylon is at work undermining the human flourishing of the majority of the world's population" (559).

This volume is a celebration of context and contextual readings. It will broaden the horizon of its readers and introduce them to the many others who are reading the Bible in the global village. It also has the potential of showing users from the Western world that their interpretations likewise occur in a particular context. *The Global Bible Commentary* "invites its users not only to respect those 'other' interpretations, but also to recognize and make explicit the contextual character of their own interpretations of the Bible" (xxiii). Patte writes:

For many of us trained in Western scholarship, acknowledging the contextual and cultural character of our interpretations was not an easy exercise. Articulating the context of one's own interpretation is articulating which is assumed, not articulated, while one interprets a text within it. Following a long scholarly tradition, we envision a contextual interpretation as the application of the teaching of the text to our context. And so it is, in a sense. But "application of a text to a context" is an attitude that unduly denies that the "teaching of the text" what we identified is already constructed in terms of context (xxiii).

In view of this "... the *Global Bible Commentary* invites its users not only to respect these 'other' interpretations, but also to recognize and make explicit the contextual character of their own interpretations of the Bible" (xxiii). Thus the *Global Bible Commentary* raises a number of important hermeneutical issues that also need to be addressed by evangelicals, who – for various reasons (and a good number of them legitimate reasons!) – will be more concerned to take the authorial intent of a biblical book as point of departure rather than their particular context.

What is not discussed sufficiently is the issue of validity in interpretation. While Patte argues, "nothing is wrong with picking and choosing in a text what one perceives as most significant and as most appropriate for one's particular context. ... this is not to say that everything goes" (xxv). He suggests two criteria for assessing "what goes", which likewise raise a number of issues:

First, we need to assess how each given interpretation is grounded in one or another aspect of the

text. But because there is a plurality of legitimate interpretations, we biblical scholars have to be more democratic and less suspicious... Second, we must ask interpreters to be as aware as possible of their religions and ideological convictions. The more that interpreters make their presuppositions explicit, the less the risk that they will simply "read them into" the text. Interpretations that pretend to be objective or a mere presentation of "what the text meant" hide their presuppositions and inscribe them into the meaning of the text that should be universally accepted.

See further presentations and assessments of this approach by W. Dietrich, U. Luz (eds.), *Bibel im Weltkontext: Lektüren aus Lateinamerika-Afrika-Asien* (Zürich: TVZ, 2002); E. Hahn, "Anmerkungen zur Lektüre der Heiligen Schrift in Brasilien", *KuD* 36, 1990, 111-55; J. R. Levinson, P. Pope-Levinson, "Global Perspectives on New Testament Interpretation", in J. B. Green (ed.), *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), 329-48; M. Oeming, *Biblische Hermeneutik: Eine Einführung* (Darmstadt: WB, 1998), 120-29; T. Schmeller, *Das Recht der Anderen: Befreiungstheologische Lektüre des Neuen Testaments in Lateinamerika*, NTA 27 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1994); R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World: Precolonial, Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003).

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The New Perspective on Paul

James D. G. Dunn

WUNT 185; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2005, 539 pp., € 149.00, hb, ISBN 3-16-148677-3

SUMMARY

This recent book by James Dunn is a collection of twenty-one essays by the author. Almost all the essays have been published before either as journal articles or as essays in edited volumes. One essay, however, is brand new ('Philippians 3.2-14 and the New Perspective on Paul') as is a lengthy introduction (pp. 1-88) where Dunn responds to much of the criticism he has received in the last twenty years. Most of the essays were written between 1990 – 2004, though three older articles are incorporated, including his famous essay 'The New Perspective on Paul' written in 1983. This book is a wonderful resource for anyone wishing to become acquainted in particular with the work of James Dunn, and in general with the so-called 'new perspective' on Paul.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieses neue Buch von James Dunn ist eine Sammlung von 21 Essays des Autors. Fast alle Essays wurden bereits entweder als Zeitschriftenartikel oder Sammelbandbeiträge veröffentlicht. Ein Essay ist allerdings brandneu („Philipp 3,2-4 und die „New Perspective on Paul“), wie auch die

lange Einleitung (S. 1-88), in der Dunn auf einen Großteil der Kritik antwortet, die er in den letzten 20 Jahren erhalten hat. Die meisten Essays wurden zwischen 1990 und 2004 geschrieben, aber auch drei ältere Artikel wurden aufgenommen, inklusive seines berühmten Essays „The New Perspective on Paul“ aus dem Jahre 1983. Dieses Buch ist eine wunderbare Fundgrube für alle, die mit dem Werk von James Dunn im Besonderen und mit der so genannten „new perspective“ auf Paulus bekannt gemacht werden wollen.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet ouvrage contient un ensemble de vingt et un essais de James Dunn, dont la plupart ont déjà été publiés précédemment. L'un d'entre eux cependant est tout nouveau – il porte sur le texte de Philippiens 3.2-14 considéré du point de vue de la « nouvelle perspective sur la théologie paulinienne » ainsi qu'une longue introduction (p. 1-88) dans laquelle Dunn répond à bien des objections opposées à ses thèses lors des deux dernières décennies. La majeure partie des essais a été rédigée entre 1990 et 2004, à quoi s'ajoutent trois articles plus anciens, dont le fameux article de 1983 sur « la nouvelle perspective sur la théologie paulinienne ». Ce livre permet de bien faire connaissance avec l'œuvre de Dunn ainsi qu'avec ce qu'on appelle « la nouvelle perspective sur la théologie paulinienne ».

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This book is a collection of essays written by James D. G. Dunn, one of the most reputable Pauline scholars. This new collection of essays is a fine compliment to Dunn's former collection of essays published in 1990 titled, *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians*. There are only two essays in the former volume that were republished in the new volume: 'The New Perspective on Paul', originally published in 1983, and 'Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law (Gal. 3.10-14)', originally published in 1985. The rest of the articles – nineteen in fact – were either not included in that former volume or were written after its publication. One article is a completely fresh contribution by James Dunn: 'Philippians 3.2-14 and the New Perspective on Paul' (chapter 22). This article was a fine contribution and I will discuss its contents shortly.

But first, a word about the lengthy introduction (pp. 1-88). In this section, Professor Dunn gives a personal account of his journey in Pauline studies (pp. 1-15) and then responds to the various attacks on his work that have been made over the last ten years or so (pp. 16-88). He takes on the criticisms by some recent works by Seyoon Kim and Simon Gathercole, as well as a host of other misunderstandings (as he calls them) regarding his work, mainly from evangelical reformed circles. He emphatically affirms that he is not 'anti-Lutheran' (pp. 17ff) but is merely opposed to one aspect of Luther's teaching, namely, that Luther's Law-Gospel antithesis was 'too completely focused on the danger of self-achieved works-righteousness and too quickly transposed

into an antithesis between Christianity and Judaism' (p. 20). He goes on to say, however, that 'I affirm as a central point of Christian faith that God's acceptance of any and every person is by his grace alone and through faith alone' (p. 21). Earlier Dunn agreed that '*the central affirmation of the doctrine of justification by grace through faith is and remains absolutely fundamental for Christian faith*' (p. 19, emphasis is original to the text). And so his seemingly radical teaching on justification by faith was never intended to downplay its importance or to lose its essentially Lutheran point of view. Dunn has attempted in his own work, rather, to highlight the social and contextual dimension of the doctrine.

In fact, throughout this introduction, Dunn endorses some rather traditional views regarding justification and salvation. Later on in his discussion of 'works of law', he gives a very strong affirmation that his famous (or infamous?) interpretation – that these refer to boundary markers (such as but not exclusively circumcision, Sabbath, dietary laws) – is simply an expression of the more fundamental theological reasoning that 'no individual or people can achieve acceptance by God by his/her/its own efforts' as seen in Romans 4.4-5; 9.11, 16; 11.16 (p. 52). And later he adds: 'Justification by faith alone needs to be reasserted as strongly as ever it was by Paul or by Augustine or by Luther. To acknowledge dependence wholly on God the Creator and Redeemer, to trust in him and give him thanks is the proper and only proper response of the creature before the creator' (p. 87). In short, I was struck by how traditional Dunn was in his views regarding justification. This is not to discount that there are still many areas where he would disagree with the traditional reformed views on this doctrine, but as far as he sees it, his views do not negate but merely complement many of the views so dear to reformed theology. Dunn's introduction, then, is a must read for anyone who wishes to get an cool understanding of his views on matters that are often so controversial.

The other fresh contribution that Dunn makes is a fine article on Philippians 3:2-14. The essay tackles this passage in a verse by verse, phrase by phrase, analysis. Dunn shows that in his former life, Paul boasted both of his ethnic privileges *and* his self-achievement. While interpreters often emphasise the latter, Dunn helps to reveal the former. Again, he is rather traditional in his conclusions and ends up somewhere in between a 'new perspective' and traditional reading (closer to the former, of course). Overall, this essay in particular is both rich and judicious and is a fine contribution to this ongoing discussion regarding Paul, the Law, and justification by faith.

This book will give the reader all they ever wanted to know about James Dunn's views on various matters of Pauline theology. And as you might guess, there is a tremendous overlap between what is said in these articles and what was stated elsewhere in his bulky *The Theology of the Apostle Paul* (1997). The introduction and final article on Philippians 3, however, are an imperative read

for anyone wishing to interact with the new perspective or the views of James Dunn.

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***The Old is Better*
*New Testament Essays in Support of Traditional Interpretation***

Robert H. Gundry

WUNT 178. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005. XIII + 454 pp., 100 €, cloth. ISBN 3-16-148551-3

SUMMARY

In this collection of twenty essays Robert Gundry presents able and interesting defences of traditional interpretations in NT theology and of New Testament texts (Gospels, Paul, Revelation). These traditional interpretations range from those in the NT itself through those in the early post-apostolic church to some that have become traditional in modern study of the NT. Three essays were not published previously, the others were at times heavily revised or were supplemented by addenda. Throughout Gundry argues his cases carefully and in a well informed manner. Altogether a stimulating volume that shows, that which is new and at times has become accepted need not necessarily be right. Rather, it should be carefully assessed and accepted only if it is more faithful to the NT text and historically more plausible than traditional interpretations.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In dieser Sammlung von 20 Essays präsentiert Robert Gundry kompetente und interessante Verteidigungen traditioneller Interpretationen im Bereich NT-Theologie und von NT-Texten (Evangelien, Paulus, Offenbarung). Diese traditionellen Interpretationen reichen von solchen innerhalb des NT selbst über Interpretationen aus der frühen apostolischen Kirche bis zu einigen, die in der modernen neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft zu traditionellen Interpretationen geworden sind. Drei Essays waren bisher unveröffentlicht, die anderen sind zwischenzeitlich stark überholt oder durch Zusätze ergänzt worden. Gundry argumentiert seine Anliegen durchweg sorgfältig und auf eine gut informierte Weise. Insgesamt ein stimulierender Band, der zeigt, dass das, was neu und zum Teil akzeptiert ist, nicht notwendigerweise richtig sein muss, sondern sorgfältig bewertet und nur dann akzeptiert werden sollte, wenn es in größerer Treue zum NT-Text steht und größere historische Plausibilität besitzt als traditionelle Interpretationen.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans ces vingt essais, Robert Gundry se fait avec compétence l'avocat d'interprétations traditionnelles de textes du Nouveau Testament (les évangiles, les épîtres de Paul et l'Apocalypse) ainsi que d'éléments de la théologie du Nouveau Testament. Certaines de ces interprétations se trouvent dans le Nouveau Testament lui-même, d'autres

sont celles de l'Église post-apostolique ancienne et d'autres sont devenues traditionnelles dans l'étude moderne du Nouveau Testament. Trois de ces essais sont nouveaux et les autres ont été largement révisés ou complétés. Gundry argumente toujours de manière soignée et se montre bien informé. Ce livre est stimulant et montre que les nouveautés qui reçoivent parfois un large accueil favorable ne sont pas nécessairement justes. On ne devrait plutôt accepter une nouveauté que s'il s'avère, après un examen sérieux, qu'elle est plus fidèle au texte du Nouveau Testament et plus plausible que l'interprétation traditionnelle qui en a été donnée dans l'histoire.

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Robert Gundry taught for many years at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California, and is probably most widely known for his extensive commentaries on the gospel of Matthew (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) and of Mark (*Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross*; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993). In the present volume he presents essays on the Gospels, Paul, the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation. Gundry writes in the introduction (vii-xiii) on what these essays have in common: "... they all share, more or less, the characteristic of defending traditional interpretations, usually over against new ones. Hence the subtitle, *New Testament Essays in Support of Traditional Interpretations*. These interpretations range from those in the NT itself through those in the early postapostolic church to some that have become traditional in modern study of the NT. The main title echoes the saying of Jesus recorded in Luke 5:39: 'No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new; for he saith, *The old is better*'" (vii). Gundry continues: "It may be thought that I support traditional interpretations because of my social location within the historic Christian faith. Well and good, but I maintain this social location because I hold that faith to be true – universally true, not just true for the confessing community to which I belong". Gundry wants his readers to judge these essays "...not on the prejudicial ground of their social locations versus mine but on the ground of their perceived faithfulness to the NT text" (vii).

The collection includes the following articles: "Hermeneutic Liberty, Theological Diversity, and Historical Occasionalism in the Biblical Canon" (1-17) in which Gundry "pays homage to the Bible as a collection of documents written in and for different occasions and argues for the importance of suiting our current interpretations of the Bible to its resultant, original diversity rather than choosing a new, sleeker canon-within-the-canon or over-systematizing biblical theology at the expense of distinctive emphases found in the various parts of Scripture" (vii); "The Symbiosis of Theology and Genre Criticism of the Canonical Gospels" (18-48, which includes two addenda: "The Gospels as Encomia?" and an assessment of the reconstruction of Jesus by N. T. Wright, concerning which Gundry writes: "Despite the importance of the historical Jesus, moreover, the traditional Jesuses