

BOOK REVIEWS

General

Theōsis: Deification and Christian Theology.

Stephen Finlan and Vladimir Kharlamov (eds). Cambridge: James Clarke, 2010. Pp. ix + 185.

Originally published by Wipf and Stock (2006), the re-publication of this book by James Clarke is welcome. This collection of ten essays explores the historical articulation and theological significance of *theōsis*, or deification, from its earliest sources in Jewish anthropology through to its expression in the works of T.F. Torrance. The first five chapters centre on scriptural sources and the writings of the apostolic fathers and apologists. Chapters Six and Seven treat of Athanasius the Great and Augustine of Hippo, respectively. Chapter Eight is on Maximus the Confessor. Chapters Nine and Ten explore *theōsis* in Reformed theology and in the Russian mystic and philosopher V.S. Soloviev (1853-1900). The chapters are of a high standard and some of them will hopefully make an important contribution to the discussions in various scholarly quarters.

Inevitably for a volume of this sort, there are some lacunae. Without wishing to impugn the good work done by the editors, two peculiar features are worth noting. First, the lack of content specifically devoted to deification as a theme in pre-Reformation Western Christianity and/or in the Roman Catholic tradition is regrettable. Would that a chapter on that chapter, comparable in scope and insight to the chapter on Reformed theology, had found a place in these pages! Secondly, throughout the volume terminology particular to contemporary Eastern Orthodox Christianity occurs without context. To be more precise, the book seems to presuppose a familiarity with the basic categories of (Neo-) Palamite theology. Anyone baffled by that reference might want to consider reading the fifth chapter of Lossky's (still valuable) *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* for support.

Even so, this book is commendable for its balance of scriptural research and systematic theological exposition, as well as for the inclusion of some topics not often studied in this context.

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New Testament

Methods for Matthew.

Mark Allan Powell. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Pbk. £16.99.

This book heralds a new series from Cambridge to win our undying gratitude. It is intended to give students a helpful account of different exegetical methods, and showing how they work when applied to actual texts. From the 19th century until just a few decades ago, the biblical scene was dominated by the historical-critical method; and then scholars started to look at other theoretical approaches, using methods drawn from philosophy, social studies and literary methods, as well as advocacy criticism of various kinds. Bible Studies is in consequence alive and very much kicking today, even if there is no longer the methodological clarity available that the historical-critical method appeared to offer in its heyday. So this book offers, for those who are just starting NT exegesis, an introduction to six hermeneutical approaches.

First there is the historical-critical method itself, slightly naively understood as redaction-criticism (“What is Matthew doing?” rather than those other important questions: “What did Jesus mean?” and “How might this apply today?”). Then come, in this order, literary approaches, feminist criticism, historical Jesus questings, Social Scientific methods, and finally Post-colonial criticism (perhaps unfairly cast as “Guilt on all your houses”). The historical-critical method, we learn, is about the meaning of the text in its original context, placing the reader into the world from which the text emerges, so that she can learn to converse with the text. Then the different approaches are laid before us: source-criticism (and our old friend the Synoptic Problem: can oral tradition by itself explain both the similarities and the differences that obtain between the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke?), genre and form criticism, a useful introduction to redaction criticism, and to the relevance of appropriate historical and cultural studies. This essay ends with a useful historical-critical exegesis of Matthew 27:57—28:15, in which I thought that the tone was slightly more defensive than it need be; but the authors skilfully brought out the humour that lies in the story as Matthew tells it.

The second essay, by the editor, on literary approaches to the gospel, helpfully points out that it is a matter of employing methods originally fashioned for fiction and other works of narrative literature, making of the text a mirror rather than a window. The question here will be: “how does it affect the reader”, not “What did the author intend?” So there are helpful remarks on narratology, with remarks about the importance of plot analysis, and conflict analysis, of story and discourse, of events, characters, and settings, not to mention a pleasing

ghost from the past, the “meaning of meaning”. This essay was very handy on rhetorical criticism, *Wirkungsgeschichte*, ideological criticism, postmodern and narrative criticism, all those terms that some readers will have vaguely heard of without *quite* knowing what they are. This essay will be useful for those who are dimly aware of the method, but cannot quite narrow it down (and it is also more perceptive and illuminating than that comment may make it appear).

The distinguished Australian scholar Elaine Wainwright contributes a helpful and shrewd piece on feminist approaches to Matthew, making the important point that there is no one feminist approach, and that feminist critics subject one another to unrelenting criticism (the “hermeneutics of suspicion” is flourishing today). Craig A. Evans in his essay on Matthew and the Historical Jesus (HJ) points to the three questions that are central to HJ studies: where to find information about Jesus, where to place Jesus (what is his “social context”), what methods and criteria to employ. Evans has not much time for the Gospel of Thomas or for J.D. Crossan’s more fanciful theories, and offers a fairly sensible account of the criteria used in HJ studies, though perhaps not in quite the depth required for undergraduate work. What I take to be a misprint dates the mythical Q-source to the 1940’s or 1950’s, which might mislead beginners for a while.

Bruce Malina is an excellent choice for the essay on social-scientific approaches, with some useful definitions of terms that are, in this area, often thrown about by scholars without appropriate clarification. Malina quite rightly insists that the aim of this approach is not “relevance” (explicit contemporary social concern), but the recovery of ancient social systems. This essay was very helpful on the presupposition of social-scientific approaches, and important questions such as how languages work, in particular ancient languages for ancient audiences. It is not just a matter of knowing the language; we must also have a grip on the social systems that underlie the employment and reception of the language, so as to become “considerate readers”. In particular Malina makes a very helpful distinction between low-context and high-context societies (where you have to explain, respectively, very little and almost everything). The essay contains one or two very striking comments, on “eschatology” and on “objectivity”, two words that are promiscuously and somewhat unreflectively all too often bandied about. Malina concludes with an exegesis of the healing of the centurion’s *pais* in Matthew 8 that is thoroughly charming, and, at least on first reading, very persuasive.

The last essay, by Fernando F. Segovia, is a worthy piece on post-colonial criticism of Matthew, urging the importance of “reading like Canaanites”. Readers of Scripture Bulletin will be pleased to know that the work of Michael Prior CM is given due prominence. Others will find that the dreary jargon of

this discourse can be somewhat off-putting; but Segovia is surely correct in pointing to “unequal relationships of power”, and perhaps also in urging that there is “no point that is settled and no consensus to be had”. Another baffling misprint has Matthew written in the 1980’s, and the centurion’s *pais* placed in Jerusalem rather than Capernaum; but these two minor errors do at least afford some entertainment.

Nicholas King SJ

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Jews and Anti-Judaism in the New Testament: Decision Points and Divergent Interpretations.

Terence L. Donaldson. London: SPCK, 2010. Pbk. Pp. 176.

Donaldson is a Canadian New Testament scholar who has written particularly on the theological status of gentiles within both Second-Temple Judaism and early Christianity. This book considers the depiction of Jews and Judaism in the writings of the New Testament, and tries to demonstrate in particular how exegetical decisions made by interpreters lead them to offer widely differing answers to the question: “Is the New Testament anti-semitic?” It is aimed primarily at students, to give them the tools to engage with the significant New Testament passages themselves, but it serves more generally as a highly readable and very useful introduction to a subject which has great contemporary relevance.

Donaldson begins by confronting the reality of the responsibility of Christian teaching throughout the centuries for the anti-semitism which reached its horrifying culmination in the Nazi Holocaust. He then offers a brief overview of the work of some twentieth century scholars who have wrestled with the question of whether anti-semitism is present in the New Testament, writers such as Gregory Baum, Rosemary Radford Ruether and James Parkes. Next, Donaldson reviews some of the key terminology, unpacking the meaning of terms such as “supersessionism”, for example, and considering the extent to which “anti-Judaic” might be a better description of some New Testament texts than “anti-semitic”. His main conclusion in this section is that the appropriate use of these descriptions depends largely on whether the New Testament writers and their communities considered themselves to be still part of “Israel”, and thus to be engaged in intra-Jewish rather than anti-Jewish polemic, as is the case with the Qumran texts, for instance.

The bulk of this volume is then taken up with a consideration of the treatment of Jews and Judaism in the major parts of the New Testament in turn – specifically Matthew, Luke-Acts, John and Paul. Each chapter highlights the key texts at

issue, points out differing interpretations of them, considers the social location of the author and his audience, and asks whether the New Testament text under review might be categorised as anti-semitic, anti-Judaic, or supersessionist. Throughout, Donaldson sets out simply to state the issues and describe the various interpretative positions, not to evaluate them or decide between them. In his concluding chapter he does try to draw together his previous observations and to offer some reflections on what relevance his study might have for contemporary New Testament interpretation. Here he puts forward ten statements or principles, the most significant of which is perhaps his emphasis on the fact that since the New Testament itself reveals a level of unresolved tension about the place of Jews or “Israel” within the Christian economy of salvation and demonstrates that a variety of Christian self-definitions are possible, this diversity may offer contemporary believers unexpected resources for renewed engagement with Jews and Judaism.

Susan Docherty

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The Spirit World in the Letters of Paul the Apostle.

Guy Williams. Göttingen: Hoeck and Ruprecht, 2009.

This is an outstanding and timely work of admirable thoroughness; and it is a good test of the relevance of its general thesis that it covers virtually all the serious issues in Pauline scholarship, not excluding the significance of Paul’s important (if not immediately pellucid) insistence on the Resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15. It is a book that hereafter will have to be dealt with by anyone wanting to talk about Paul’s attitude to the spirit-world (as well as giving admirable reason for approaching that neglected issue); and, since Williams is dealing with the principal trajectories in Pauline thought, it needs to be studied attentively by anyone who wants to talk sense about Paul at all today. The author’s aim is to rescue spiritual beings from the dark cupboard into which New Testament studies has placed them. Williams argues that they are an inherent feature of Paul’s writings, and not an embarrassing extra, something that the apostle has demythologised, a son of the Enlightenment before his time. So the Spirit, our author argues, is a “spirit” (it is obvious once you think about it), but also different. With impressive grasp of the relevant, especially Jewish, sources, Williams argues that this is something that we have to take seriously, the more so since the Judaism from which Paul emerged had no unified doctrine of spirits.

One cannot say everything that ought to be said about a book whose range is as wide as this one’s; but it is pleasing that so much time is given to the early

reception history of the Pauline epistles. In particular, Williams' account of Marcion, so often mentioned, so rarely examined in detail, is extremely helpful. Best of all, Williams always gives the reader a clear idea of where he has come from, and where he is going; this invitation to see the wood as well as the trees is a quality rarely encountered in the generally unattractive literary genre of published doctoral theses. And it is of a piece with this that this work of really serious scholarship is divided into pleasingly small, "bite-sized" morsels, although all of them require a good deal of thoughtful chewing. Williams is also an example to other scholars in that he insists on the methodological priority of reading the text of Paul over its interpretation.

Williams is entirely at home in the Jewish literature that is Paul's background, and his account of the range of understanding of the figure of Satan in the documents needs to be taken very seriously. He argues convincingly, against the standard view of the "powers" in Paul, that they have to be set against Jewish angelology if they are to be properly understood; Paul may well be speaking of hostile angels who were responsible for the Crucifixion. We do neither ourselves nor Paul any service unless we recognise that coming from where he came from, he is entirely likely to have believed in demons, despite the substantial scholarly consensus against that view. Creating Paul in our own image and likeness is an alluring temptation, one to be avoided at all costs.

The author is very good on the notoriously tricky *stoicheia*, and in this connection offers some genuinely new considerations on the neglected Excerpts of Theodotus, and on Bardaisan's cosmology. The "elements", he suggests, are "material and physical substances which exercise a demonic and hostile control over human life" (p.171). There is, too, a very helpful excursus on Sin and Death, which cause many of us great difficulty in the readings of Romans: "one foot in the realm of concepts, and another in the realm of spirits".

The major innovation of this thesis is his application of the insight that spiritual beings form part of a person's understanding of the wider world. In Paul's case, the argument runs, they range more widely than scholarship has realised; and Williams draws out the implications of this conclusion for the key areas of Pauline thought: Christology, soteriology and his understanding of community. On these three issues, Williams handles the material with real authority, without ever drowning the reader in unnecessary detail. He also copes skilfully with Paul's terse formulations (which owe their terseness, of course, to the extent of shared presuppositions between Paul and his correspondents). He concludes that Paul's Christology was not so much "angelic" as "angel-inspired" (p.203). In this connection, Williams makes interesting use of the view of Ashton (followed by Christine Joyntes) of Paul as "possessed" by Jesus.

Williams' treatment of Pauline soteriology is both compelling and illuminating; Paul, he argues, is "taking a concrete narrative of redemption which claimed that Christ defeated certain evil angelic powers through his death on the Cross" (p.228), supported with a detailed exegesis of the difficult but important text 1 Corinthians 2:6-8 (the "rulers of this age"), and suggests that Paul, using material of this sort, develops a distinctive Christian soteriology with a narrative thread all of its own. The author emphasises (against the modern trend) the cultural importance for Paul's world of healings and exorcisms (and I wondered if he might perhaps have included here the mysterious reference to Paul's first work in Galatia, at Galatians 3:1).

There follows a very striking treatment of Paul's grasp of the effect of the spirits on the community as a whole; in particular the account of that notoriously difficult passage at 1 Corinthians 11:10, and a new explanation of "because of the angels": Paul was attempting to defend his community from spiritual intrusion.

This book is a salutary reminder that it is indeed possible for Paul to have linked sexual desire and the activity of hostile spirits; and it is very helpful on the reading of some of the more difficult passages on that topic in Paul, such as, of course, 1 Corinthians 7. He is helpful, too, on the question of community conflict, which, he argues, Paul traces to the activity of spiritual powers vying for supremacy. There was one eye-catching footnote, on which the author did not expand, in which he alluded to his view that the origin of 2 Thessalonians looks like "an early attempt to pin down in writing Paul's oral eschatological teaching". Perhaps that will be the subject of his next work. For the moment, let me give a very hearty welcome to this excellent volume, which robustly challenges the lack of interest in, not to say outright scepticism about the spiritual world, that we encounter in NT scholarship. If this book is read as widely as it ought to be, things are about to change.

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The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul.
Douglas A. Campbell. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2009. Hbk . Pp. 1248, £33.99.

Since the publication of K. Stendahl's *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* in 1976 , and E.P. Sanders' *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* in the following year, Pauline scholars and students have been aware of the need to try to reconceive the thought of the Apostle Paul and his stance towards Judaism. A host of new perspectives had, since the mid-1960's, almost imperceptibly arrived on the scene of academia so that though the publications noted above were

groundbreaking in themselves, they were the evidence of movement in thought rather than simply constituting a sufficient reason for this. Liberation theology, feminist theology, opposition to anti-Judaism, and sociological approaches to the Bible had already begun to influence the field of Pauline thought.

Douglas A Campbell, in a huge *tour de force* of over 1200 pages, seeks to use the new insights to finally attack, and perhaps even to demolish the doctrine of justification, what the great German historian F.C. Baur had about 180 years earlier described as ‘the great buttress of Lutheranism’.

The view of Campbell is that the theory of justification supplies a particular model of salvation and presupposes a rational, self-interested individual with God being perceived not only as omnipotent but also as a cosmic lawgiver and judge operating a retributive justice. Thus Campbell proceeds with great vigour to seek to demonstrate that this rational, conditional and voluntarist conception of salvation is not really in accord with the best exegesis of its foundational texts in Galatians, but most especially in Romans 1-4, on which it has traditionally been based.

It is impossible in a single review to give a fair account of this ambitious project nor even, if I were so-minded, to oppose it. Suffice to say that the sheer amount of work involved and the areas it deals with in detail are worthy of significant respect. There is no doubt that the last half century demonstrates the need for a fresh look at justification and, as Campbell, rightly in my view applauds, participation in Christ. Albert Schweitzer, W.D. Davies, E.P. Sanders and others have stressed that it is the latter conception that lies at the centre of Paul’s gospel, and Campbell’s thesis is that until justification is dismantled, we will not be truly able to see the significance of Paul’s gospel for theology or for the whole of life.

A substantial part of the argument focuses of necessity, on the Letter to the Romans. Whilst I am in agreement with many of the emphases of Campbell’s exegesis, such as his opposition to Romans 2:1 being directed against Jews and Judaism, and to an individualistic understanding of salvation, I was not particularly convinced by the strong emphasis on Romans 16:17, and his positing of a specific opposition to Paul and his gospel in the Roman context, in parallel with the teachers opposing him in Galatians. I think Campbell would have been better advised not to lean too heavily on J.L. Martyn for this perception from Galatians, though it is clear that in adopting apocalyptic as his lens for viewing Romans as envisaged by Martyn for Galatians, the opponents of Paul arrived, as it were, by the same post! But the importation of hostile countermissionaries who are about to arrive in Rome is highly speculative and

since these are described as Jewish Christian teachers who view Paul's gospel as wrong, this is far from being a new opinion.

A basic problem that many scholars have sought to address is that justification has tended to produce an anti-Jewish form of the gospel. Martin Luther, as Campbell notes, is not responsible for all that Lutheranism may have built upon his thesis. We do need to be much more differentiated in our understanding of Reformation doctrines. Campbell, to his credit, is very much aware of this, but by putting such emphasis on opposition to Paul in Romans, I think he has not completely succeeded in avoiding at least some residual effects of the traditional form of the doctrine, especially as he holds on to the outmoded depiction of Jewish Christian countermissionaries to Paul's gospel. However, the jury will be out for some time on this extensive volume, and we must keep an open mind until the scholarly voice is clearly heard. My own view is that a new paradigm of Paul is possible emphasizing participation, and hence transformation, in Christ and based upon a positive continuity between the Testaments following Paul's form of argument 'how much more' in Christ. In this view, Jewish identity in Christ may continue, and likewise Paul is not required to cease observing Torah three years into his mission whilst having argued in 1 Cor. 7 that each should remain in the calling in which they were called. Campbell does seem to suggest that Paul may allow for this continuation of identity in certain circumstances but Martyn's form of apocalyptic, espoused by Campbell, unfortunately allows no space for such diversity. I have, however, over a decade ago called for a stance 'beyond the New Perspective' on Paul, and I applaud the attempt in this volume to offer just that.

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Paul and Scripture.

Steve Moyise. London: SPCK, 2010. Pbk. Pp. 151.

Readers of *Scripture Bulletin* may be familiar with Steve Moyise's work, as he is one of the foremost authorities in the UK on the use of the Old Testament in the New, and has written extensively on this subject, especially on the Book of Revelation and on Paul. He always manages to combine this level of scholarship with an extremely clear and straightforward style of writing, making his work very accessible, and this volume is no exception. It appears to be aimed particularly at the undergraduate students whom Moyise has such experience of teaching; apart from the clear explanatory style, notes are kept to a minimum, a select bibliography for further reading is included, and key issues (e.g. Introductory Formulae, the Testimony Hypothesis) are summarised and discussed in separate shaded boxes.

This book sets out to consider how Paul interpreted scripture, which he regarded as the oracles of God (Rom 3:2), in the light of the Christ-event, which he came to consider decisive for salvation. It therefore takes a general approach, considering scriptural passages and themes which are central to Paul's major undisputed letters. Moyise begins with a brief introduction to the life and work of Paul and to his letters. This is followed by chapters dealing with Paul and the Creation Stories (including the use of Adam traditions), Paul and Abraham (focusing on Paul's use of the "justification" text of Gen 15:6), Paul and Moses, Paul and the Law (including a very helpful overview of the "New Perspective" on Paul), Paul and the Prophets (divided into two chapters, one dealing primarily with Paul's view of the relationship between Israel and the gentiles in the time of salvation, and the other exploring how texts from the prophetic books were used as a source of ethical guidance for his churches), Paul and the Writings, and finally Modern Approaches to Paul's Use of Scripture. The latter offers an extremely useful overview of the views of significant contemporary Pauline scholars, such as Richard Hays, Francis Watson and Christopher Stanley. *Paul and Scripture* is succinct, clear, even-handed, and informed by the latest scholarship – I recommend it unreservedly to students of the New Testament and anyone seeking an introduction to this important subject.

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Not that Man! Restoring St Paul's Reputation.

Nicholas King SJ. Stowmarket: Kevin Mayhew, 2009, Pp. 253, £15.99

This book is very deliberately written for those who do not like Saint Paul, hence the title *Not that Man!* The working title had been *St Paul: for those who hate St Paul*, which gives the reader a fairly clear sense of what the book is aiming at. It attempts to tackle head-on the problem of St Paul's mixed reputation, known in some quarters for his uncompromising attitudes, tolerance of slavery, misogyny, and sexual prudishness. Written in the 'year of St Paul' declared by Pope Benedict XVI, this work seeks to make a frank appraisal of St Paul's views and his legacy, without dodging the difficult or inconvenient texts.

Overall, Nicholas King has produced an accessible, honest, and timely guide to one of the Bible's great moral minefields. General and lay readers should pick up this book (which does not assume specialist expertise) to find stimulating discussions of Church authority, engagement with the secular world, relationships, and sex, firmly centred upon the interpretation of Paul's letters. This has an obvious importance for Christians, but non-Christians will also

benefit from the up-beat appraisal of the apostle in this work, counter-balancing the negative image of Paul which seems to prevail in much of the wider public.

The great strength of this book is that it does not attempt any implausible revisionism or contortions when dealing with the letters. It does not attempt to transform St Paul into a much misunderstood liberal saint; that picture of the apostle would be just as false as the authoritarian bigot model. Dealing with a complex figure who lived in a world far removed from our own, it is crucial that readers are exposed to the context of what St Paul says, as well as the nuances and complexities of the documents. Nicholas King achieves this admirably, for instance, in his discussion of Corinth and the Corinthian Church. St Paul spent a lot of time reacting to problems and trying to re-order fractious congregations; it would be a mistake to see letters such as the Corinthian correspondence as an attempt to set out consciously a full social programme.

As with any short and accessible book, the only problem with *Not that Man!* is that it raises as many interesting questions as it solves, and it leaves the reader wanting to hear more at times. This is addressed quite cleverly by questions for reflection at the end of each chapter (e.g. “What would Paul say to your city today?”, “Is ‘leadership’ needed in the Christian Church?”). The effect of this is that it makes the book into a very helpful stimulus for meditation and evaluation; it manages to be both positive and open-ended.

Does it successfully restore St Paul’s reputation? The best part about this book is that it allows the reader to decide.

Guy Williams

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Christianity in the Making Vol. 2: Beginning from Jerusalem.

James D.G. Dunn. Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2009. Hbk. Pp. 1347.

This is the second of three volumes of what might be described as a “megastudy” of Christian origins. In volume one, *Jesus Remembered*, Dunn applied a historical critical method to a study of Jesus and the gospels, and here he turns his attention to the followers of Jesus in the years 30 – 70 CE, focusing primarily on Acts and Paul’s letters. This is, quite simply, a masterly survey and synthesis of this crucial period in the emergence and development of earliest Christianity, drawing on all the insights and wisdom Dunn has gained over a lifetime of scholarship in the field. In terms of its structure, the book is divided into four sections. The first sets out the issues in embarking on a “Quest for the Historical Church”, and offers a review of all the sources which will form the

evidence for the study, introducing Jewish and Roman writers such as Josephus and Tacitus as well as key New Testament writings. The next section considers the earliest Christian community centred in Jerusalem, their social character, leadership and beliefs about Jesus; it then discusses the mission of Peter and asks who the Hellenists were. A third section is devoted to an analysis of Paul, his mission, his churches, and who he thought he was. In this part, the Pauline letters are treated in some detail in historical sequence. Finally, there is a section dealing with “The End of the Beginning”, exploring the deaths of the first Christian leaders, Paul, Peter and James, considering their legacy as reflected in such New Testament writings as Ephesians, 1 Peter and the Letter of James, and reflecting on the impact on the churches of the destruction of Jerusalem.

Throughout this volume there is detailed discussion of the primary sources, wide engagement with the most contemporary secondary literature, and succinct summaries of the work of significant scholars of earlier times, such as Baur, Reimarus and Bousset. In fact, one of the most remarkable features of the book is the way Dunn has been able to combine an informed broad overview of the period with an attentive probing of specific New Testament texts. He writes in a highly readable and accessible style, keeping technical details to footnotes as far as possible, and including various maps which will be of use to students. Second year undergraduate students definitely would be able to take something from this book, and no one else with an interest in the New Testament or early Christianity could fail to find something of interest in it. *Christianity in the Making* is surely destined to become a classic – we can only look forward to the third and final volume.

Susan Docherty

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