

engages grounds his reflections, builds sound connections to the reader, and authenticates his insights. This makes the book not merely an autobiographical exercise, which would have been problematic on a variety of levels, but a communal and ecclesial one that is enriching and profound.

While I cannot recommend the book for typical undergraduate or graduate courses on Christology or the Synoptic Gospels, I truly believe it would be put to good use in a specialized class in contemporary Christian spirituality, or better yet, a homiletics class in a seminary or in the graduate setting. At the same time I think it would work wonderfully in an adult Christian formation group/bible study in a parish or simply for one's own theo-spiritual edification. While very few of us will actually get to hear Pierce preach the Good News of Jesus the Beloved/Prodigal Son from the pews, this book gives splendid access to what it would be like if we could actually be there.

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The Paul Debate: Critical Questions for Understanding the Apostle. By N. T. Wright. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015. xi + 110 pages. \$34.95.
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This deceptively slim volume not only introduces the reader to a clear and succinct summary of the major themes of N. T. Wright's substantial contribution to Pauline scholarship, but also exposes the reader to the questions that have informed Wright's arguments and continue to be debated in contemporary studies of Paul. In the preface, Wright makes it clear that he has written this volume as a response to critics of his magnum opus, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God (PFG)*. Wright explains, "Those who have ears will hear my critics and their specific criticism on every single page that follows. The chapters of this book are steeped in and shaped by the reviews" (ix). While this is true to the extent that the themes Wright addresses are chosen because they are questioned by critics of *PFG*, the shaping remains only at the level of organization. Wright responds to his critics by restating and clarifying his thought rather than altering his positions.

Each chapter of the book explores a major component of Wright's understanding of Paul's worldview that is questioned in reviews of *PFG*. Wright's scholarship is oriented toward an overarching understanding of Paul's thinking, drawn from reading Paul's letters collectively (an abductive approach). He argues that this abductive approach functions as a necessary corrective to the inductive approach that marks most Pauline scholarship, a method that begins with detailed exegesis of passages and from that detail moves to construct

a larger understanding of Paul's thinking. In the fifth chapter of the book, Wright asserts not only the value of his abductive approach for understanding Paul, but also defends this approach against claims that he imposes a narrative on the letters of Paul, arguing that his view of Paul is drawn from careful study of Paul's letters read in light of an extensively researched understanding of Paul's historical context, and supported by careful exegesis.

Wright's focused presentation in these chapters offers insights that, while not new to those familiar with Wright's work, are stated both clearly and succinctly. These insights include the centrality of Paul's "flashpoint" experience of the risen Christ illuminating both the past and the future, his description of Paul as a thoroughly Jewish thinker, his emphasis on the continuity in Paul's thought between God's covenant with Israel and the new covenant community in Christ, and his treatment of Paul's understanding of justification as an aspect of participation in Christ. The first chapter, emphasizing that Paul's purpose in writing was to encourage others to think with the mind of Christ rather than to answer every question, is the strongest in the book.

Wright's response to his critics is problematic in several ways. First, rather than respond to his critics individually and specifically, he summarizes their arguments (there are no footnotes in this volume). This contributes to the clarity and brevity of his presentation, but the detail and nuance of individual reviews is lost, and Wright's response is directed to a general argument that fails to engage some important precise questions regarding his work. In addition, Wright often makes broad and sweeping claims that are not necessary for his response and raise additional questions. For example, Wright's claim that "'apocalyptic' was never a worldview or a movement at all but only a literary genre" (51), overstates the case and ignores important ways that apocalyptic images influence Paul's thinking. Finally, while Wright's emphasis on consistency, coherence, and continuity in Paul's thought is valuable and contributes to a fuller understanding of many issues in Paul's letters, aspects of Paul's letters that do not contribute to this coherence remain unaddressed, such as Paul's rejection of continuity between the new covenant and the Mosaic covenant in 2 Corinthians 3.

While scholars familiar with Wright's contribution to Pauline scholarship will not find new material in this book, it does provide a clear summary of some of the major themes in Wright's analysis of Paul. In addition, if the reviews of *PFG* listed in the back of the book are read in conjunction with Wright's response, the book invites the reader to think through major debates and important questions regarding Paul's letters and theology.

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