

cation (e.g., comparison of Paul's use of *isotēs* with democracy in the United States, p. 306, or the reference to honour and shame in the Japanese culture as an illustration of Graeco-Roman social dynamics, p. 325), and even breaks out in a more homiletical style at times.

The strengths of the commentary are its clear writing style and its accessibility. One does not need a reading knowledge of Greek nor be trained in technical language to benefit from this commentary. As such, the commentary is most suitable for laymen and Sunday-school teachers. Advanced students and scholars may find the commentary less suited for their needs. The main weakness (or benefit, depending on one's perspective) stems from the limitations associated with any commentary based on one particular translation. Many may find the constant reference to and comparison with the NIV trying, especially if they are working from another translation or from the Greek. Furthermore, a lack of a table of contents, even a one-page list, takes away slightly from the convenience of this otherwise useful commentary.

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The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context

by Mark D Nanos

(Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002. xiii + 376 pp. pb. ISBN 0-8006-3214-1)

The publication of Mark Nanos's PhD thesis (University of St Andrews, 2000, Philip Esler, supervisor) continues the work of *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Epistle* (1996). In both of these books Nanos questions some conventional interpretations of Paul which, he argues, have contributed to antagonism between Christians and Jews.

Central to Nanos's project is his contention that, for Paul, observance of the Torah has continued validity for himself and other Jewish members of the new movement. His converts in Galatia, however, are not Jews. Rather, they are righteous Gentiles within synagogue communities who are 'suffering marginalisation [from the wider Jewish community] for considering themselves already full members of the larger Jewish communities as though they had completed proselyte conversion' (pp. 6f). The issue behind the debate in Galatians is thus essentially social rather than theological. His converts assume that they should be entitled to the exemption from religious practices and duties granted to the Jewish community because of their belief in Jesus the [Jewish] Messiah. Such an acceptance would have been important for them in two contexts – the wider pagan (Nanos's preferred term for the Gentile community) context and the minority Jewish community. But they are in a no-maNanos's land because they have not completed proselyte conversion: the pagans still regard them as part of pagan society and therefore not exempt, while the minority Jewish community is reluctant to acknowledge them as full-fledged members unless they would be prepared to take on full Torah obedience. Although Paul's converts might regard themselves as 'righteous ones of God', no one else really did.

But the 'influencers' (Nanos's term for Paul's opponents in the letter) offer them a way through. They insist that full participation in the Jewish community means the completion of proselyte conversion, including circumcision. If they become converts, then everything would be fine. The pagans would acknowledge that they were Jewish converts and they would be accepted as converts within the Jewish community. And Paul's converts could carry on in their belief in Jesus Messiah provided that they were full-fledged Jews.

Paul disagrees. So he writes to his converts very much like a parent would speak to a beloved child who is in danger of being led astray by her peers. His concern is two-pronged. If they listen to the influencers and complete conversion to Judaism, they subvert the message on which he has staked so much. The 'good news' of the influencers, that they could believe in Jesus Messiah and complete proselyte conversion, was not good news at all because it meant that they would have to go the whole way to full observant practice. Furthermore, this would undermine Paul's whole belief that the Gentiles could become the righteous ones of God as *Gentiles*. The other danger is that Paul's converts would simply return to their pagan roots with equally disastrous consequences for their faith. So Paul's message is focused: 'Gentiles already in Christ (already known by God) . . . would thereby subvert the very foundations of their faith if they were to complete the process of proselyte conversion (seeking to be known by God) or alternatively to accept the constraints of pagan identity' (p. 16).

Nanos advances this thesis in a three-part argument encompassing ten chapters. In Part 1 he sets out his methodological basis for interpreting Galatians, concentrating on the evidence available for identifying addressees and opponents (chapter 2) and the rhetorical character of the letter (chapters 3 and 4). Part 2 explores the identification of the groups Paul has in mind and their situation. In chapters 5 and 6 Nanos explores the identity of the recipients and those who are offering 'another good' and tried to understand the exigencies of the situation from both perspectives. Nanos believes that the situations emerge from the innovative nature of the gospel. Paul's gospel contends that believers in Jesus Messiah are already righteous ones and children of Abraham and God. Conversion to Judaism is not required. Chapters 7 & 8 set out Nanos's identification of 'the influencers'. He considers most current labels (Judaizers, opponents, agitators or troublemakers, the Teachers) to be inadequate. These 'influencers', according to Chapter 8, are Jewish but not Christ-believers, nor do they represent the Jerusalem church and are not outsiders.

Part 3 develops the identity and situation in Galatia in greater detail. Chapter 9 moves from telling us who the influencers are not (chapter 8) to who they are. They are probably Gentile proselytes themselves who 'facilitate the inclusion of any pagans who express interest in becoming full members [of the Jewish community] as proselyte' (14). But, as chapter 10 confirms, they are not Christ-believers. The book concludes by showing how a sympathetic reading of Galatians from both perspectives might help enhance the respect for the beliefs and actions of the others, not only in Galatia, but in modern society as well.

This is a very challenging book. It raises significant questions about standard reconstructions of the historical context of Galatians. Nanos builds on recent Pauline scholarship and takes the occasional and epistolary character of Galatians seriously. But he presses this further than most scholars, trying to understand the historical context of Galatians from a close re-reading of the epistle for historical clues. The result is generally impressive. Nanos presents a plausible historical context for the situation behind Galatians, explains Paul's occasionally passionate, even intemperate, language and tries to understand Paul's opponents and his converts from their perspective. On this reading, Galatians is not a theological tractate or a polemical attack on Jewish identity or even a statement about faith versus works. It is, rather, the letter of a concerned parent warning his children about dangers on their current path which they do not see. That kind of parental advice is often laced with strong irony and hyperbolic descriptions of the people who are influencing the child, a method which naturally flows from such a polemical situation. But the point is often missed in a prosaic reading of the situation.

This re-reading will need to be tested more generally against the wider picture of the early church as well as against more conventional exegesis. In this reconstruction, surprisingly little attention is given to the picture in Acts of Paul's ministry. And, as Nanos himself acknowledges, this reconstruction does not really address the question of the significance of the text for today. What it does, however, is exclude those readings which treat Galatians as an anti-Jewish polemic. That in itself is a significant gain.

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New Creation in Paul's Letters and Thought

by Moyer V. Hubbard

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The motif of new creation runs like a thread through scripture. Indeed, some argue that it offers a coherent centre to biblical theology. So Hubbard's thorough discussion of Paul's new creation idea is welcome indeed.

Current interpretations may be differentiated under three heads: new creature, new creation, new community. In Hubbard's judgement, the traditional interpretation is still the best. The phrase *kainē ktisis* (2 Cor 5:17 and Gal 6:15) then becomes 'new creature' referring to the individual. More recently scholars interpret the phrase in a cosmic sense emerging out of Paul's apocalyptic context; it therefore means a 'new (cosmic) creation'. A minority of modern scholars emphasise the corporate dimension of Paul's language, God's (re-)creating of a new people.

In the first of three parts, Hubbard examines key Jewish texts. In an overview of the later prophets Hubbard acknowledges that the final chapters of Isaiah promise a new heaven and new earth but the 'former things/new things' motif in Isaiah 40–55 is clearly set in the context of redemption. Jere-

miah makes this soteriological motif clear with his emphasis on a new in-the-heart covenant, a theme expressed by Ezekiel in his new Spirit language. Israel's problem is interior and the solution is interior. *Jubilees*, by contrast, has an apocalyptic vision of the defeat of the powers leading to a completely transformed universe. Oppression demands an exterior solution, a theme echoed, not surprisingly, in Revelation. In contrast, *Joseph and Aseneth* is about new birth. Hubbard sees Aseneth's conversion as 'new creation', despite the fact that the phrase does not occur in the text. Her plight as a Gentile is dire: 'how can a pagan, born in sin and nurtured in idolatry become a full member of the family of God?' (76) The answer: only by being re-created by the Spirit of God, through metaphorical death and re-birth.

In Part Two, Hubbard examines Paul's death-to-life symbolism. After a chapter outlining insights from cultural anthropology, Hubbard turns to Rom 6:1-11. His succinct discussion is clear and helpful. His link of 'our old person' of Rom 6:6 with the 'unenabled person' (99) of 7:14-25 and 8:1-14' (99) who remains enslaved to sin is persuasive. This, however, makes it unlikely that Paul could be speaking of himself as a Christian in 7:14. Rather, the Christian is 'walking in newness of life', the antithesis of the description of the 'old man'. Paul's language highlights the ethical implications of 'dying with Christ'. This theme continues in 7:1-6 where Paul picks up the threads of his earlier discussion in chapters 4–6. Throughout these chapters, Paul has a series of antitheses: law – grace; flesh – Spirit; sin – righteousness; death – life which Hubbard summarises in a helpful diagram (106). Hubbard then compares Rom 7:4-6 with 2 Cor 5:14-17, showing that dying and rising with Christ is the dominant metaphor and it is soteriological (108). The contrast between law/flesh and Spirit (7:6) also introduces the new covenant motif. Behind this contrast lies Ezekiel 36:26-27 and 37:14 where Yahweh promises his people a new Spirit to enable them to keep his commandments. This is far more than a 're-energized human *pneuma*, but Yahweh himself taking up residence within the individual to do what they could not' (112). In Paul's view, Ezekiel's new Spirit was operative in the present. Gal 2:19-20 shows that Paul's death-life texts also describe an experience of Christ and the Spirit. And this is intensely personal, contrary to the reading given by several prominent modern interpreters: Paul's emphatic 'I' signifies a personal, transforming experience of the risen Christ, even if it is in some sense making a point which would be true of all Christians. Paul's death-life symbolism, therefore, is 'anthropologically oriented and maintains a clear focus on the individual' (129). In sum, dying with Christ was a 'generative, life-creating event which conveyed both the gift of new life, and the demand of obedience. This dual emphasis is intrinsic to Paul's *creative dying*, and contributes to its fundamentally bifocal nature, addressing both the individual and the community in a single metaphor' (129).

Having established the anthropological and individual orientation of Paul's dying-and-rising with Christ language in Part II, in Part III Hubbard considers the key new creation texts: 2 Cor 5:17 and Gal 6:15 under the title 'the old and the new'. Hubbard finds no evidence for a cosmological interpretation of 'new creation'. He concludes, 'As the context makes clear, in 2 Corinthians 5:17 *kainē ktisis* is an anthropological motif relating to the new