

Blomberg is too concerned with validation of authentic Jesus material (19–21, 63, 66, 79, 86, 97, 120–21) when his audience likely accepts its historicity from the outset.

If readers are looking for a NT theology that agrees with every one of their theological positions, *A New Testament Theology* will not satisfy. However, if you want to see a fresh and invigorating approach to the subject, one that challenges your thinking and drives you back to the Bible for answers, then purchase this book and fasten your seatbelt.

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Paul's Theology in Context: Creation, Incarnation, Covenant, and Kingdom, by James P. Ware. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019. 270 pp. \$30.00.

James Ware is a Professor of Religion at the University of Evansville. This particular volume targets “clergy, students, and laypeople who wish to enrich their understanding of the letters of Paul within the New Testament” (1). As the subtitle of the work manifests, Ware structures his analysis of Pauline theology around the four themes of creation, incarnation, covenant, and kingdom. But the last two words of the main title set the book apart: Ware seeks to situate Paul’s teachings “in context”—within the apostle’s religious, cultural, and social settings. Along the way, Ware also interacts with contemporary interpretive debates, including questions regarding “the New Perspective on Paul” and the nature of diversity within early Christianity.

Part One (examining “Creation”) considers how Paul worked out the received teachings of the Hebrew Scriptures, but also how his message was heard in a pagan context. Ware commences “by asking how Paul’s message about the creator God would have been heard by his gentile hearers in the context of ancient beliefs regarding the cosmos and the divine” (8). Against polytheistic beliefs, Paul emphasized the transcendent nature of the Creator, thus framing the nature of *cosmos* as creation. Against philosophical rationalism, Paul underscored revelation as the source of integral knowledge (16–18; cf. Rom 1:1–5, 3:21–26; 16:25–27). Moreover, Paul believed in creation *ex nihilo* (cf. Rom 4:17), a datum passed over by many interpreters. In Pauline theology, the Fall has corrupted the created order, and humanity in particular. Although the doctrine of creation affiliates humanity with the Creator, the doctrine of the Fall posits a fundamental separation from the Creator. Paul’s understanding of the “flesh” maps to this fallen reality.

Part Two examines Paul’s doctrine of the “Incarnation,” which merged two key facets of Jewish expectation: a coming Davidic ruler and the promise that YHWH would dwell among his people. Ware maintains that a robust account of Paul’s doctrine of “participation”

assumes a foundational doctrine of “incarnation.” Through faith in Christ, the believer enters into supernatural union with God, becoming the temple of the “living God” through the Spirit of Christ. This divine indwelling reveals “the profoundly Trinitarian structure of Paul’s thought” (86; cf. Rom 8:9–11; Gal 4:4–6). Furthermore, this “participation” lies within a larger narrative of redemption, and is only possible through the incarnation, “God with us.” Ware therefore contends that if Jesus Christ is not God, Paul’s doctrine of participation would be incoherent.

According to Paul’s theology, “the eternal creator God, the transcendent source of all reality, had become human in the person of Jesus of Nazareth” (56). Ware, while trying to avoid anachronistic exegesis, asserts that Pauline theology “matches” the Nicene emphasis upon Christ being both fully divine and fully human (cf. Rom 10:12). He further contends that Paul applies YHWH passages from the Hebrew Scriptures, not only to the risen Christ but also to the pre-incarnate Son of God (71). In addition, Paul took “Israel’s central affirmation of faith” in the Shema and habitually applied the term “God” to the Father and the term “Lord” to Jesus Christ (73–74).

Part Three focuses upon Paul’s theology of “Covenant.” Ware argues that the so-called “New Perspective on Paul” brings up valid *questions* regarding the unity of Paul’s thought and its coherence with the Hebrew Scriptures, but “it does not provide an *answer*” (95). In response, Ware attempts to “offer a *solution* to the seemingly irresolvable problem of the law in Paul” by situating the apostle’s theology “in its Jewish and biblical context” (95–96). Ware argues that “the works of the law” are not “markers of Jewish national identity” alone (101). He proposes that the phrase “works of the law” within the context of Rom 1:18–4:25 refers to “the *whole* law, with the focus on its *moral* demands” (101). At the same time, Paul’s prism of evaluation of “the works of the law” comes through “the law considered *apart* from the covenantal context of faith in Christ” (113; cf. 111). In Ware’s view, the new covenant (as developed in the New Testament) steps behind the Mosaic Law by bringing the Abrahamic covenant to “its full realization” (115; cf. 113). Ware also reasons that the πίστις Χριστοῦ construction should be interpreted as an objective genitive (122 fn. 9). He maintains that the Pauline theology of “justification” includes the “process” of both the forgiveness of sins through an imputed righteousness and the transformation of hearts through divine power and infused righteousness (131, 178). Interpreters dedicated to Reformation principles will naturally demur from this loading of “justification” with the virtues of sanctification, although connecting both with God’s righteousness. In order to build his own interpretation, Ware draws heavily from the Psalms (including Psalm 62, 98, and 143).

Part Four is entitled “Kingdom” and covers the “good news” of Pauline eschatology. In Paul’s understanding, “the kingdom is the restoration and fulfillment of creation” (172, 175). While Paul’s doctrine would have answered the ancient longing to conquer death, pagan

thought did not consider resurrection to be possible and was not attracted to it. The Stoics, Middle Platonists, and Epicureans all agreed with “the iron finality and irreversibility of bodily death” (140; cf. Acts 17:18–32). The Christian hope of *resurrection*, however, was rooted in Jewish expectation (147). Only resurrection is “the real defeat of death” (144). This anticipation of a future resurrection informed a radically different view of God. The Judaeo-Christian deity was “not only a different God, but a different kind of God altogether” (156). When Paul argued that “flesh and blood” cannot inherit the kingdom of God, he was not denying a bodily resurrection, but was rather focusing upon the “*weakness and perishability*” of the body’s present materiality (168). First Corinthians 15 is nothing less than “the announcement that Jesus has conquered physical, bodily death for all who believe in him” (158). Chapters 11 and 12 cover the “New Life” and the “New Law” in Paul’s epistles. According to Ware, the “law of Christ” is “the new way of life taught by Jesus,” focused upon the love command and exemplified in various ways, including sexual purity.

Part Five (“Paul and Christian Origins”) examines “Paul’s true place within the foundations of Christianity” (202). Ware insists that the only extant Christian writings that can be firmly placed in the first century are New Testament works, the Didache, and 1 Clement. Paul’s epistles (“explosive documents”) serve as invaluable historical evidence, and one may even find hints of earlier traditions in kerygmatic passages like 1 Cor 11 and 15 (Rom 1:1–4 and Phil 2:5–11 are relevant as well; cf. 55–57). The Pauline evidences, which reflect core beliefs transmitted by the apostles, directly contradict “the thesis of an originally pluriform Christianity” widely propounded in critical scholarship (202). “The narrative of ancient Christianity as the story of an original diversity suppressed by the imposition of a later orthodoxy, of an original cross-less and resurrection-less Christianity, is simply unhistorical” (216).

The final chapter traces how Pauline texts (cf. Gal 2:6–9) support the status of Peter, James, and John as “apostolic pillars”—a triumvirate still reflected in the general epistles of our New Testament canon. Both Acts 15 and the Apostle Paul himself (1 Cor 15:5–8) cordially associate Paul among these apostolic leaders. First Clement, Ignatius of Antioch (and one could add Polycarp) specifically parallel the apostles Peter and Paul. One could also add that the Book of Acts *as a whole* implicitly parallels the apostolic authority of the Apostle to the Jews and the Apostle to the Gentiles (both heal a paralytic, raise the dead, receive missionary visions, are delivered from prison, etc.). Ware forcefully argues that apostolicity (which seems to be an important doctrine in New Testament theology but often lacking from systematic theology) was a foundational concept in the early church. Unfortunately, the volume ends abruptly, without a summative review or concluding chapter.

Paul’s Theology in Context is both thought-provoking and question-generating. The final section, in particular, has far-reaching implications in reconstructing the history of early Christianity. The entire volume is characterized by exegetical precision combined with historical rigor.

Ware's assessment of the New Perspective on Paul will interest many. One appreciates his careful analyses and keen insights, even when demurring from some of his specific conclusions. The volume fuses profound acumen with accessible readability.

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The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles, by Abner Chou. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2018. 251 pp. \$23.99.

Abner Chou serves as a professor of Biblical Studies at The Master's University and Seminary in Santa Clarita, CA, and is the John F. MacArthur Endowed Fellow. Chou is a graduate of The Master's University (B.A.) and The Master's Seminary (M.Div., Th.M., Ph.D.). He has taught courses in Greek, Biblical Theology, and Hermeneutics, and spent two years teaching in Israel with the Israel Bible Extension program (IBEX).

The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers is a culmination of Chou's theological studies which began in college and continued through his Ph.D. and his dissertation. Chou's continued engagement with hermeneutics, and especially with the question of the "New Testament Use of the Old," resulted in this current effort to uncover the hermeneutics of the biblical writers. In many respects, this book takes a "back door" approach to dealing with the question of how the New Testament uses the Old Testament.

In the first chapter, Chou defines what he calls the "Quest for Authorial Logic," that is, the author's rationale when referencing previous Scripture. Chou helpfully expresses his method and approach in this first chapter. In summarizing what he sets out to do, Chou notes, "Before we can call the apostles odd, reject their hermeneutic, or accept their hermeneutic, we need to understand what they actually did. Only then can we see if we should do as they do or as they say or, as I will argue, both" (18–19).

We see Chou's penchant for biblical theology as he ties the hermeneutical approach of the human authors of Scripture to biblical theology. Chou delineates that "this book uses the New Testament's use of the Old to teach us the nature of hermeneutics and interpretation" (23). Throughout the book, Chou seeks to demonstrate how the prophets and apostles interpreted Scripture by means of a literal, grammatical-historical framework and how this heuristic approach should be emulated by subsequent readers of Scripture.

Chapter 2 functions as a secondary introduction where Chou lays the groundwork for his approach, including his presuppositions, which include authorial intent, meaning and significance, and the reality of intertextuality. This approach is helpful in that it makes it much easier