

tidy, a well-dressed person who enjoyed the respect of statesmen and church leaders all over the world.

The book is divided into the following divisions: His youth; the first phase of his academic career; the theology of hope; political theology; the Cross and the Trinity as focus areas of his theology; his latter contributions in systematic theology and the new beginning at the end. Each division consists of a few chapters.

People with a variety of interests will find this autobiography of use and very interesting. The two hundred students, who wrote dissertations on his theology, will rue the fact that they did not have access to all these biographical information. Every person who is interested in German theology and the ecumenical world should read this book at least twice. It contains many facts, anecdotes and perspectives that one can share with friends and students. Let me mention a few: Otto Weber played a major role in Moltmann's life as study-leader, theologian and family friend. He regards his *Grundlagen der Dogmatik* as one of the most important books in his library. In moments of uncertainty, he would consult Otto Weber, and not Karl Barth. He personally agitated to get Eberhard Jüngel appointed at Tübingen, whilst other very famous theologians opposed the appointment. Despite many theological and political differences between them, Wolfhart Pannenberg remained a very close friend. Moltmann firmly believed that universities should be left to the academics and maintained that the innovation-mania and ideas about structural improvements of universities by officials from education departments normally do not lead to much. He resisted the "Americanization" of the old German universities and wanted to keep them as places of knowledge, research and publications. At Tübingen his academic duties during the week amounted to lecturing for four hours, two hours of seminars, and two hours of meetings with his twenty doctoral students and of course also included university and faculty meetings.. He is one of the few high-profile theologians who has a working relationship with the medical fraternity.

This book should not only be read by lecturers, but by everyone who has an interest in theology and church life. I can hardly think of a more appropriate way of motivating them to live intellectually and to share in the great tradition of German university theology.



Neyrey, J H 2004 – *Render to God: New Testament understanding of the divine*

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Reviewer: Prof Ernest van Eck (University of Pretoria)

Render to God is about "the neglected factor" in New Testament study, God (see Dahl, N, *The neglected factor in New Testament Studies*, 1975). With Jesus' saying in Mark 12:17 ("render to God the things that are God's") as cue, Neyrey studies the God-talk in Mark, Matthew, Acts of the Apostles, Romans, 1 Corinthians and Galatians (chapters 1-6). In the two final chapters (7-8) the focus is on John and Hebrews, the two books of the New Testament in which Jesus is also called God. In this study Neyrey makes use of certain elements of Judean and Graeco-Roman God-talk (e.g., the rabbinic commonplace of four questions [Mark], the contrast between the covenants of promise [Abraham and David] and the covenant of Moses [Galatians], the "kingdom of God" [Matthew], the two powers of God, creative and executive [Romans and John], and the correlation of the names Jesus and Lord [John]), as well as three social science models (patronage and clientism, purity and holiness and honor and shame, appended at the end of the book for the uninitiated reader).

In chapter one Neyrey studies the God-talk in Mark. Mark's God is called Father ("Abba") and Lord. As Father, God is the patron of Israel, its client, with Jesus as the mediator or broker of that which God gives: power, commitment, inducement and influence. As the Lord, God is the sovereign vindicator of those being rejected, and will raise them with power and enthrone them in heaven. Finally, God's holiness is not that of the separation of certain classes of unclean people, but rather that of inclusion, with prayer replacing sacrifice. Matthew's God favors the covenants of promise, which means bestowing blessings, mercy and grace upon everybody – with the exclusion of no one. As Provider, God cares and protects Jesus from womb to tomb, *inter alia* controlling the events surrounding Jesus' death. As patron of his kingdom, God is benevolent, foolish and shameful: He forgives debt, pays workers who did less work than others the same wage, makes the last first, sends his son to rebellious tenants to collect rent, he is slow to anger, gives ample time for repentance, is merciful, and eats with "sinners". Luke's God (ch 3) is the ultraistic benefactor whose pleasure is to give gifts and grant favors of every kind. Moreover, as benefactor, God is impartial and his gifts cover the widest scope of persons and places. He is the benefactor of all peoples, in every way, in all places. Also, as provider, God has a plan, order and purpose for his world. (For a comparison of the God-talk in Mark, Matthew and Acts, Neyrey gives a tabled summary on p 105.)

In Romans (chapter 4) Paul's God-talk is coherent and systematic, following the classical Graeco-Roman presentation of God in terms of epistemology (what do we know about God and how do we know it), physics (what is the nature of the Deity), and ethics (what behavior necessarily follows from the nature of God). Paul's emphasis falls on physics, which he presents in terms of two attributes of God (mercy and just in judgment) and two powers of God (creative and eschatological). God's mercy is freely given through the death of Jesus, and God's eschatological power is seen in his power to raise the dead. God is impartial, be it when showing mercy or exercising just judgment it emphasizes another characteristic of God, his inclusivity. God-talk in 1 Corinthians deals with patronage, honor, order and disorder (chapter 5). In terms of patronage, God is patron who performs acts of power in regard to Jesus, grace and favor to Paul, and gives numerous spiritual gifts to the Corinthians. God enjoys supreme honor, and honors other proportionately: Jesus is raised up to life and to a unique position at God's feet in heaven and as head of the body of God's church, while Paul is honored with the role of apostle and is given wisdom. According to Paul, God is also a God of order. As a former Pharisee, Paul was strongly socialized to perceive the world as an ordered cosmos (as did the Bible and the Jerusalem temple). Therefore, there is a cosmic hierarchy (God – Christ – husband – wife; 1 Cor 11:3), there is a heavenly hierarchy (God – Jesus – Spirit; 1 Cor 12:4-6), and there is a hierarchy in the church (apostles – prophets – teachers; 1 Cor 12:28-30). The God of 1 Corinthians also has a map of things (all food is kosher [1 Cor 10:25-26], gold – silver – precious stone – wood – hay – straw [1 Cor 3:12], wisdom – knowledge – faith – gifts of healing – working of miracles – prophecy – the ability to distinguish between spirits – tongues – the ability to interpret tongues [1 Cor 12:7-20]), a map of times (past as sinful and present as enlightened, childhood as negative versus adulthood as positive), and a map of places (inside and outside). And who stands at the top-of these maps? Paul! He is an apostle, has received wisdom, and has become an adult in the faith. He plants, and Apollos is the one who waters. Moreover, sometimes God turns the world upside down and creates new maps: weakness is strength, foolishness is wisdom, and those of no honor or standing topple those of honor, wisdom and power, and the last becomes the first. Who was the last one to see the risen Jesus, who is the least of all the apostles, and who is weak? Off course, it is Paul! Why does Paul describe God in this way? Obviously for polemical and apologetic reasons. Paul's God-talk in Galatians, as in Romans, also has as its base the classical Graeco-Roman theological system of the Deity in terms of epistemology, physics and ethics (chapter 6). Paul's immediate revelation (received on the Damascus-road) serves as his unique source of knowledge of God, and elevates him above the Galatians who

had received their knowledge of God from mortals. God acts freely in benefaction, of which Paul and the Galatians are examples. One of God's most important benefactions is the Spirit, and the appropriate response to this benefaction is to walk in the Spirit, and not to return to the flesh. God creates new creatures as adopted children and heirs, thus making one free of Judean customs. God is full of mercy, and once received, foregoing this mercy means just judgment.

Neyrey finally turns to John (ch 7) and Hebrews (ch 8), in which Jesus is acclaimed God, Lord and equal to God. In John God makes Jesus equal to Godself (Jn 5:18), and possesses the same two powers God has, which includes God's full creative and eschatological power (raising the dead, judging and having life in himself). In Hebrews, Jesus is God because he possesses the primary characteristics of a true deity (Heb 7:3): he is uncreated and ungenerated in the past, does not have a father or a mother or a genealogy for that matter, and is imperishable and eternal, without end. Jesus is also a divine figure because he shares in God's two basic powers: ruling power (Heb 1:8) and creative power (Heb 1:11).

Render to God is brilliant, a *tour de force* of the new perspectives that open up when social science models are employed to understand Biblical texts. It also makes a contribution to historical Jesus-studies. If Neyrey's interpretation of Paul's understanding of authority in 1 Corinthians, for example, is correct, then Paul's continuity or discontinuity with Jesus in this regard should be re-assessed. Also, if Neyrey is correct in his understanding of Mark's and Matthew's God-talk, then it lends support to many scholars who are of the opinion that Jesus understood God in exactly the same manner: that God's holiness is to be found in his mercy.

