

understood by Christians. In the thirteen chapters he covers stories of redemption from the 7th century BC prophet Isaiah (Ch 1) to the 20th century liberation and feminist theologians Jon Sobrino (Ch 12) and Rosemary Radford Ruether (Ch 13) to uncover the rich, diverse and even competing (objective and subjective) understandings of salvation, their social context and their strengths and weaknesses. The work includes: The writings of Luke and Paul (Ch 2-3), the Church Fathers Irenaeus, Gregory of Nyssa and Anselm (Ch 4-6), the Reformers Luther and Calvin (Ch 7-8), and the German theologians Ritschl, Barth and Bultmann (Ch 9-11). Brandos has chosen these specific “stories on salvation” since they offer the reader a rich variety of very different perspectives on the subject. Brandos (page 3) – in my opinion – succeeds well in reaching the aim he has set for himself. In his own words: “By gaining a deeper understanding of the many problems, questions, and issues involved, it is hoped that the readers may be enabled to develop their own views on the subject more clearly while at the same time gaining a greater appreciation of views that differ from their own as well as the difficulties inherent to all of these views”. This he has done exceptionally well. His soteriological survey in which “these figures speak for themselves”, can admirably serve both the reading and teaching of soteriological viewpoints for student and teacher alike, especially since he highlights not only the inescapable connectivity of different views on salvation with different understandings of God, but also their varied dependence on the work of the Holy Spirit, the Church, the word of God and the sacraments given the adopted understandings of the work of Christ. Brandos convincingly concludes that any understanding of God, salvation or the work of Christ will in many respects be inevitably problematic. What is, however, important to him, is that in its own way, each of the stories of redemption he considered, is capable of contributing to the transformation of human beings and the world. This indeed is not only a theological mouthful, but a valuable insight for formulating any soteriological perspective. What enhances the value of text even more, is the inclusion of a helpful Timeline (ix-xi), Additional Resources (consisting of lists for Further Reading and Discussion Questions on each chapter, 199-210) a Glossary (211-213) and an Index (215-220).



Cooper, T D 2007 – Dimensions of evil: Contemporary perspectives

Publishers: Fortress Press. Paperback 285 pages. Price: Unknown

Reviewer: Ms Anastasia Apostolides (University of Pretoria)

This book deals with the problem of evil. Terry D Cooper, a Professor of Psychology at St. Louis Community College-Meramec, analyzes how evil is understood by the multiple perspectives of evolutionary biology, evolutionary psychology, philosophy and systematic theology, ethics, feminist theory, liberation theology and so on. Cooper examines the works of pivotal thinkers such as Charles Darwin, Rosemary Radford Reuther, Sigmund Freud, Aaron Beck, Carl Jung, Paul Tillich and Phil Hefner, to name but a few. Cooper aims to investigate the destruction caused by evil in the natural, psychological and social or systemic realms experienced in life. Cooper begins by stating that “writing a book on evil is an overwhelming task that can easily push an author into feelings of embarrassing grandiosity” (page 8), but also explains that this is “not a definitive book on the entire problem of evil”, but a book that “furthers the conversation” on the problem of evil (p 9).

In chapters one and two Cooper explores Darwin’s theory of evolution and the destructiveness of nature or natural evil that it presents. Darwin’s work still remains a challenge to traditional theological views of God. Cooper furthers his examination of post-

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Darwinian theologies by examining the work John Haught and Langdon Gilkey, and then contrasts their viewpoints with the work of atheistic evolutionists Richard Dawkin and Daniel Dennett. Cooper tries to establish how far Darwin can be extended to describe evolutionary psychology and its explanation of human destructiveness.

In chapters three and four Cooper deals with human destructiveness from a psychological viewpoint. Cooper examines Sigmund Freud, Erich Fromm and Ernest Becker. Cooper then uses the work of Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr to do a theological critique of Freud, Fromm and Becker. Next Cooper explores a cognitive perspective on evil, paying particular attention to the work of Aaron Beck, Carl Jung and John Stanford. Cooper then turns to the work of theologian David Augsburger on the issue of hate.

In chapters five and six Cooper looks at social explanations of evil. Stanley Milgram, Philip Zimbardo and Roy Baumeister outlined and analyzed, that evil can be explained from a "dispositional" or "situationist" viewpoint. Next Cooper tackles the question of the relative importance of whether social and or individual sin should have the advantage in a discussion of evil. Cooper explores this question by bringing into contact feminist and liberation viewpoints with the work of theologians Langdon Gilkey and Reinhold Niebuhr.

In chapter 7 Cooper presents his concluding thoughts by drawing attention to twelve major convictions he derived from his explorations into the problem of evil. He concludes the book by stating: "My hope is that this survey of destructiveness – natural, personal, and social – a survey that is by no means exhaustive, will prove helpful as we continue both to understand and combat evil around us and within us" (p 264).

This is a thought provoking book on the problem of evil. Cooper succeeds in what he set out do in the beginning of the book: not to collapse one dimension of evil into another. Cooper was quick to establish in the beginning of the book that he was "deeply suspicious of reductionistic views of evil" (p 9). Cooper acknowledges the power of natural, personal and social or systemic evil and believes that a multidisciplinary approach is fundamental in the study of evil. This book is a must for anyone who is doing a study on the problem of evil.



Dunn, J D G 2007 – *The new perspective on Paul*

Publisher: Mohr Siebeck. Paperback, 536 pages. Price: Unknown

Reviewer: Dr M Cromhout (Johannesburg)

Now and again biblical scholarship and theology undergo what can be called a paradigm shift in interpretation. The "New Perspective on Paul" (NPP) certainly is such a paradigm shift. The "new perspective" is a term Dunn originally used for E P Sanders' work on Early Judaism and Paul, but it has since developed to now being mainly associated with the work of Dunn himself. Ever since the now famous Mansion Memorial Lecture delivered by Dunn in 1982, Pauline studies – at least in some circles – have challenged the received Protestant/Reformed tradition's interpretation of what Paul meant by "works of the law". The point of the enterprise was to understand that Paul's argument *also* had a social and ethnic dimension to it when appreciated within its historical context, and therefore should not exclusively be seen through the lens of Martin Luther's basic theology of justification by faith as it developed in reaction against Roman Catholicism. Employing social studies, Dunn opened up new territory for understanding Paul, serving to enlighten those who welcome it,