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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*

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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,

and soliciting vigorous opposition from others who see it as a threat that will destroy the very foundation of the Protestant/Reformed theological tradition.

Dunn's basic thesis is that "works of the law" do not refer to "legalistic works righteousness", or to the fact that one could "earn" one's salvation through "works". What Paul opposed, rather, was the insistence of Israelite believers in Jesus to maintain the social boundary between Israelite and Gentile. The "works of the law" – mainly circumcision, dietary laws and Sabbath observance – which the Gentile believers had to adopt, were important "badges" of identity, or "test cases" of fidelity to Israel's covenant with God. As far as these Israelite believers were concerned, Gentiles had to become members of Israel's covenant, and so adopt "Jewish" identity through circumcision and/or observing purity laws and the Sabbath day. They could not exercise their faith in Jesus by remaining Gentiles. It is the Gentile adoption of these "badges" of identity or "works of the law" that Paul strongly opposed. He attacked the social function of the law, a certain attitude towards the law, whereby the law served as a boundary marker between "Jew" and Gentile.

Dunn also insists, however, that "works of the law" refer to the *entire* law, yet it specifically focuses on those "test cases" of covenant fidelity and matters for which "Jews" were persecuted during the Maccabean period. In tension with this is Dunn's argument that the law still had a positive function for Paul, that is, when it is "denationalized" and no longer the sole possession and boundary marker of Israel, and so can still be a guide for everyday life, especially in its fulfillment of the love command. Paul had a narrow and a broad approach to the law: one will not be justified by doing the works of the law (attacking the social function of the law), yet one will still be judged by the law (where it still reveals God's commandments). This tension in Dunn's interpretation is an aspect which still needs to be resolved.

Related arguments are Paul's reproach of Israelite "boasting". This is not "boasting" about one's own works and achievement, but Paul's attack is on "Jews" and their self-perceived covenant "set-apartness", their sense of having a privileged status in the eyes of God, and not being liable to condemnation as the Gentiles were. Paul moved away from his former "zeal", which, as in the tradition of Phinehas, focused on protecting Israel's "set-apartness" to God.

The above argument formed part of the reason, so Dunn has maintained for nearly 30 years, why Paul had developed his theology of justification by faith. It was to help remove the social boundary between "Jew" and Gentile and to oppose a wrong (boundary making) attitude to the law in view of the all embracing gospel.

This is the NPP of Dunn in a nutshell, which of course, contains many more nuances and aspects of interpretation than could be discussed here. These can be discovered and digested from the book that contains Dunn's continuous work and legacy on the NPP. The majority of the articles (chaps. 2-21) were published between 1983 to 2004, comprising 20 articles that set out, develop, and answer objections to the NPP. There are also two "new" additions: chapter one sets out another defence of the NPP, while chapter 22 looks at Philippians 3:2-14, a passage that had not yet received serious attention in terms of the NPP from Dunn.

So does the NPP undermine the Protestant/Reformed theological basis and tradition of justification by faith? This notion Dunn repeatedly denies. "I affirm", Dunn maintains, "as a central point of Christian faith that God's acceptance of any and every person is by his grace alone and through faith alone ... For my own part, even though it is not the language of the Reformed tradition, I have no particular problem in affirming that the doctrine of justification ... is *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*; I am astonished by and repudiate entirely the charge that 'the new perspective on Paul' constitutes an attack on and denial of that Lutheran fundamental ... It is *not* opposed to the classic Reformed doctrine of justification. It simply observes that a social and ethnic dimension was part of the doctrine from its formulation, was indeed integral to the first recorded exposition and defence of the doctrine – 'Jew first but also Greek'" (pp. 21, 33). On the whole, Dunn attempts to address a total of 12

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misunderstandings, confusions and objections triggered by the NPP in the first chapter. If Romans was Paul's own defense of his doctrine, then chapter 1 in this book is Dunn's own defense of the NPP.

Chapter 22 looks at Philippians 3:2-14, as the bulk of Dunn's work on the NPP focused on Galatians and Romans. Again, Paul is addressing a situation in which his mission is challenged as indicated by verses 2-4, and again he has to address the problem of "Jewish" confidence in their ethnic identity. Paul turns to his own reasons for having confidence in the flesh, a confidence which is based in the things listed in 3:4-6. For Dunn, 3:4-5a lists matters pertaining to confidence in ethnic identity, while 3:5b-6 pertains to matters of choice, and Paul's extra commitment and sense of self-achievement in terms of that identity. Dunn aptly notes, "if the first half of the list of Paul's pre-Christian grounds for confidence before God gives substance to the insights and emphasis of the new perspective, then it could equally be said that the second half of the list gives as much substance to the emphasis of the old perspective" (p 474). Needless to say, Dunn goes on to deny the latter, and this entire passage for him is a vindication of the NPP and the theological nuances it brought to light.

What Paul lists, he goes on to describe as "rubbish" or "excrement". It is the all consuming life as a Pharisee and advantages as a circumcised Israelite that Paul has in mind. Yet, it does not mean he denied these things of having any value. Dunn argues that Paul still saw continuing value in circumcision, the Law, and his own status as an Israelite (Rm 3:1-2; 11:1; 2 Cor 11:22). "*The sharpness of the contrast is not so much to denigrate what he had previously counted as gain, as to enhance to the highest degree the value he now attributes to Christ, to the knowledge of Christ, and to the prospect of gaining Christ*" (p 475). However, if Philippians was a situational letter, it has to be asked what value, if any, can be attached to something described as *ta skubala*? Dunn himself writes of Paul seeing these things as comparatively "valueless and entirely unsatisfactory understanding of the righteousness required by God" (p 483).

Another motif also evident in the NPP is Paul describing the process of salvation in vv 9-11. The righteousness of God Paul will only secure at the resurrection from the dead – it is not something he already attained. This points to participation "in Christ" or the process of personal transformation "in Christ", and therefore justification should not be understood as limited to an "alien righteousness" imputed to the believer, or the cross as atonement. In contrast with his previous confidence, Paul tells us in humility that there was still much to be done on his part, requiring intense personal exertion in order to reach the goal and win the prize "of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (3:14). What we find here is Dunn's insistence in other articles on distinguishing between initial justification and final justification – salvation for Paul is a process!

Dunn and his work on the NPP have brought to light the importance of ethnic identity in the New Testament, and the challenge Paul faced in his attempt to make one people out of the many. This book is a testimony to Paul's struggle in this regard, as well as Dunn's identification of that struggle when appreciated in its social and historical context, dimensions that cannot be ignored in the development of Paul's theology. If you are a supporter of the NPP, this book is a convenient collection of Dunn's work on the topic and a necessary addition to your library. If not, it will be a principal dialogue partner. Either way, the book is a testimony to Dunn's contribution to New Testament theology, and, I believe, a testimony to how a scholar has improved our understanding of Paul and his doctrine of justification by faith.

