

Burke, Trevor J. & Rosner, Brian S. (eds.) 2011. *Paul as missionary: identity, activity, theology and practice*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark. 420 pages. ISBN 9780567604750. Price not quoted.

**Reviewer:** Prof Dr Jacobus (Kobus) Kok, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.

For those who are interested in Paul as a missionary, like myself, this is a very good reference book. Often one finds that scholars turn to Acts to describe Paul's, or that of earliest Christianity's, missionary thinking and practice, but not to Paul's literature itself. This book attempts to fill this lacuna by focussing on Pauline literature as such. It brings together many well-known and mature scholars, who from their own fields of specialisation reflect on Paul as a missionary. Many of these scholars have published monographs on Paul related to the missionary dimension. So in this sense, one gets the feeling that this book brings together years and years of experience by a variety of scholars.

The editors have organised the book by means of four main sections, namely: (1) Paul's *identity as missionary*, his (2) *activity*, (3) (missionary) *theology* and (4) *missionary practice*.

There are many interesting chapters, but I will refer to only a few personal highlights:

In recent years, scholars like Judith Lieu, Jörg Frey, Tobias Nicklas and many others like myself have argued that it is simply anachronistic to think of Paul as a person who has converted from Judaism (in) to Christianity – from one religion to another. We should rather think of Paul as someone who stayed a Jew from birth to death. This means that if we want to understand Paul the missionary, we should try to understand him as a first century Jew. In this book, Paul's missionary identity is explored exactly in this way, that is, from the vantage point of his *Jewish identity*. One such example is the interesting chapter by James Miller who reflects on Paul's *Jewish identity* and his *Jewish heritage*, as the appropriate and necessary way to understand Paul's mission and his message. Miller turns to the insights of ethnicity studies to illustrate that it is perhaps not correct to see a too strong discontinuity between Paul's "Jewish" self and his "Christian" self. This is a very important insight with which I also agree (see J. Kok et al, 2013, *Sensitivity to outsiders*). It is agreed with Miller that the idea that Paul made a "clean break" with Judaism is no longer the preferred view. Research into ethnicity has illustrated that ethnicity is something that is always part of an individual and there is in most instances some form of continuity with that which has existed before. The research results of migration studies often come to the same conclusion. Consequently, Paul and his missionary theology should be located within Second Temple Judaism, but naturally in a strong dialogical

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relationship with the new paradigm of Christ and the “new” dimension it brought about.

In the second section, the book focuses on Paul’s missionary *activities*. Again we find several interesting chapters. Here I will again only refer to some that have particularly caught my attention.

Beverly Roberts Gaventa points out that in the past scholars have not made enough of Paul’s own view of himself as an agent of God’s own mission – that which David Bosch referred to as the *missio Dei*. Paul’s activities, of which his letter writing is but one, should be seen as being part of the bigger picture of God’s mission. The point is that God has a mission, and that Paul not only saw himself as being taken up in God’s mission, but also wanted his readers to realise that they are agents in God’s mission.

Another interesting chapter is that of Daniel Hays, who also reflects on the whole issue of ethnicity. After providing a short overview of ethnicity in the first century, he guides the reader to appreciate the way Paul challenges and reframes the “ethnic map” of antiquity. Paul provides new language that challenges his readers to construct new paradigms of ethnicity that has the potential to unite people across previously exclusive social and ethnic boundaries. This perspective is very interesting and although others like Bruce Hanson (*All of you are one*, 2010) have said the same thing before, Hays puts it in such a way that one sees the matter from a completely new angle again.

In the third section of the book, which is also the most extensive, the authors reflect on Paul’s missionary *theology*.

Karl Sandnes wrote a thought-provoking essay on Paul who “became a Jew for the Jews and a Greek for the Greeks”, “becoming all things to all people” and the (primary) missionary motivation behind that (cf. 1 Cor 9:19–23). The implicit intention of Paul was to transcend boundaries and build closer relationships with people with whom he interacted, and did so for the sake of winning them over to Christ. Sandnes argues that it is only an ethos of self-giving love that could make such an accommodating strategy possible – something that Paul learnt from Christ’s self-giving love and his incarnation (cf. Phil 2:5–11). However, Sandnes argues that this was no easy endeavour and that Paul did not always succeed in becoming all things to *all people*. In fact, most of the time he adapted more easily to his Jewish audience than to his Gentile audience. In the end, according to Sandnes, we could see that Paul was perhaps not as flexible as he thought he was, or wanted to be. One such example is found in 1 Corinthians 9, where Paul “regressed” to a more “traditional” approach that is typically Jewish. If I understand Sandnes correctly, Paul did not go far enough, in the sense that he still upheld some elements that did not really “transform” gender distinction, etc. In other words, Paul says that we are all one in Christ (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 12:13; cf. Pauline tradition Col 3:11), but in practice, and in contexts of

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conflict and change, he supported the very fibre of that paternalistic world. So the end, Paul was not so flexible after all (cf. 1 Cor 9:19–23).

Another interesting chapter is that of Stanley Porter, who focuses on the role of reconciliation in Paul's missionary theology, and naturally turns to 2 Corinthians 5:18–21. According to Porter, Paul calls on his readers to become part of and be taken up into the reconciling mission of God by acting as God's ambassadors (cf. 2 Cor 5:20). Next, Porter turns to Romans 5:9–11, in which Paul accentuates the nature of God's reconciling agenda with the world and the fact that he sent Jesus to die for an estranged world. The outcome of this is that the enmity between God and people, and between people as such (Jews and Gentiles) should be restored. Similarly, Roy Ciampa (in the following chapter) argues that God himself has acted in and through Jesus to set things right. Consequently, believers are called to continue this missionary approach that has its origin in God's mission.

In the final section of the book, the authors focus on Paul's missionary *practice*. In his chapter, William S Campbell draws attention to the universal nature and intention of Paul's missionary practice. Paul was no ethnocentric particularist, although his letters were primarily engaged with particular contexts in the congregations to whom he was writing. Campbell turns to 1 Corinthians 7:17–24, 2 Corinthians 10:13 and Romans 12:3–8 to illustrate that for Paul, the local and particular should not be seen as being in conflict with the trans-local and the universal. In Paul's theology, believers are called to become like Christ, but this in no way determines sameness on an ethnic level. As I understand Campbell, it seems that, in the first century already, Paul realised something of the "Sache" of the message of Christ and the diverse ways in which that message could be actualised. In other words, Paul realised that becoming like Jesus would call for the "enculturation" of those values in particular social contexts. Sameness, in other words, does not mean "cultural" or "ethnic" sameness, but sameness in the implicit "values" embedded within a particular "Christian" frame of reference.

An important and interesting question in studies on the missionary practice in the first century is certainly whether Paul urged or expected believers to be actively engaged in evangelistic outreach to outsiders. Michael Barram postulates that although we do not have explicit commands to evangelise outsiders or examples of believers who engage in what we would call evangelism, Paul wanted his readers to develop a "missional consciousness" in everything they do. A missional consciousness, with a "salvific intentionality" is essential to the nature of Christianity. It could be agreed with Barram that an intentional missional consciousness existed from the beginning and, in my opinion, continued in this tradition. One such example is 1 Peter 3, where the author encourages women to conduct themselves in such a way that their exemplary ethical behaviour would convince their husbands of the gospel truth. This intentional missional consciousness

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was also clear in Paul, as we see in Galatians 6:10, where believers are encouraged to do good to all, both those within and those outside the household of God.

As I have said at the beginning, those that have an interest in Paul as a missionary, or those that wish to understand the missionary dimension in earliest Christianity, would find this book a very helpful resource.

As in any book, there will always be some elements that have not been addressed. One such dimension is the dynamic relationship between mission and ethics. In my own studies this has been of particular interest to me, and having sensitivity for this point of view, I tend to look for these dimensions. In my opinion, more could have been done on this; or perhaps I should say that we could encourage the editors and authors to produce another good volume in which they could reflect on the dynamic relationship between Paul's missionary and ethical perspectives against the backdrop of his Greco-Roman *Umwelt*. As I have argued in my own work, identity, ethos and ethics should not be separated from one another. Identity (who I am) directly relates to what I do (ethos) and why I do that (ethics). Any group has a set of inclusive and exclusive boundary markers. Inclusive ethos is shared with the rest of society and exclusive ethos is not shared with the rest of society, but serves to strengthen group identity to the inside. It is therefore rather interesting to think about the way Paul, in the process of missional identity construction, distinguished himself and his group from outsiders, and to what extent he shared the ethical boundaries with his *Umwelt*. In many ways, as Abraham Malherbe illustrated in his commentary on 1 Thessalonians, Paul's ethical values reflected much of that which was common in pagan philosophy – *albeit* from a completely different (theological) motivational basis.

In conclusion, this book fills a gap in Pauline research, specifically the paucity of discussion vis-à-vis Paul's missionary identity, theology and practice. The authors have done very well in addressing this need. In fact, they have illustrated that the missionary dimension is central to Paul's theology, and that in future much more should and could be done on Mission in the New Testament and early Christianity. In my opinion, this research field is not only one that is central to Christian theology, but will also become necessary in the post-Christian global world of the future. For some the word "mission" is to be avoided. Perhaps they are right. Nevertheless, call it what you like, Paul's vision of expansion, Paul's vision, Paul's calling, Paul's theological inclusivism – "mission" lies at the heart of the gospel, and those who are called to be taken up in the *missio Dei* are called to take this "missionary" dimension seriously. In the end, Christ's followers are called to be agents of God's reconciling mission of restoration and reconciliation of a broken and alienated world.



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Hunsinger, George (ed.) 2012. *Thy Word is truth: Barth on scripture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. ISBN: 978-0-8028-6674-5. Price: \$40.00; £26.99.

**Reviewer:** Dr Wessel Bentley, Research Institute for Theology and Religion, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.

George Hunsinger, renowned Barthian scholar, edited this collection of papers (some historic papers of interest to the theme and some as the result of a recent seminar on Barth and Scripture) focusing on Barth's use and views of Scripture.

To Barth, Scripture is of utmost importance as it is one of the main sources through which we come into contact with the testimonies of those who anticipated, participated in and reflected on the life and ministry of the chosen one, Jesus. Jesus Christ is central to Barth's theology as the full revelation of God, made known in human flesh. This point is pivotal to the way in which Barth read Scripture; with Christ at the centre. Jesus is the promised hope of Israel of the Old Testament; Jesus is the fulfilment of the covenant; Jesus is the creator of the community of God's people, who span beyond ethnicity, physical boundaries, time and space. When one reads Barth, the reader is quick to discover this Christological focus which is fundamental to understanding Barth's views on theology, history and in this case, Scripture.

Hunsinger makes this point clear in the introduction, which will be of special importance for those whose first encounter with Barth may be through this publication. But, as Hunsinger states on p. xx, it is much better to read Barth himself than to read what has been said about him. Nonetheless, reading this publication before reading Barth will very well prove to be of benefit in spotting themes and trends in Barth's work and to recognise Barth's methodology in reading Scripture.

The book is divided into three sections, namely Orientation, Exemplification and Application.

In the first section, Orientation, McAfee Brown offers an introduction to the themes in this volume. The first theme is the strong Christological emphasis in Barth's reading of Scripture. The second is that, to Barth, the authority of Scripture is not locked in the assumed inerrancy of Scripture (a view to which he does not subscribe), but in the weight of the historical weight and significance of the person of Christ and the testimony regarding him. Lastly, the place of the Christian tradition in the light of Scripture is described. The church, as the elect community, finds itself under the authority of Scripture, as the Church is the continuation of the testimony of Scripture, the testimony which anticipated the coming of the Messiah and the testimony of the growth of the community responding to God's self-revelation in Christ. At times the church has erred in deifying Scripture itself and lapsed into the mistake of thinking that Scripture is the Word incarnate

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instead of seeing it as a testimony concerning the incarnation of God through Christ. What weight does Scripture then have in light of the Church's existence and history? Sonderegger describes Barth's view of Scripture as being both reliable and inspired, but not to be idolised. Scripture can only be reliable and inspired because of the Person of Christ. Scripture is inspired, not because of human creativity, but because it is centred on Christ, the Word that became flesh. It is reliable for the testimony which spans history and consistently declares the nature of God as being a God of grace, compassion and self-giving.

It is this testimony which forms the nature of the church. In the church's hunger for divining truth, it has read Scripture in different ways, sometimes to honestly hear the Word while at other times to reinforce its own agenda. In the third chapter, Hunsinger reflects on Smard's description of Barth's view on Scripture. Smard's article is arguably one of the most profound works on Barth's view of Scripture, citing that to Barth, the historical-critical reading of Scripture is simply not enough. A responsible engaging with Scripture necessitates the historical-critical reading of Scripture to be followed by theological reflection and understanding the practical application of the relevance of Scripture for both the context in which it was written, but also for use in the modern context. A careful reading of scripture is necessary as it is not a divine document which dropped out of heaven, but should be studied carefully, precisely because it comes from human hands which had a role in its production. To study Scripture only through historical-critical readings thereof does an injustice to Biblical hermeneutics as the writers were after all "... not concerned with history, but religion" (p 36). This does not mean that history was not important to the writers of Scripture. History greatly influenced the nuances of the writers' accounts, saturating the questions asked and the responses given in the light of the Messiah. It is the story of the Messiah, however, which should take precedence. To this, Frei adds his view as he discusses Barth's notion of "realistic narrative". It is the story which is of significance; not treating Scripture as mere fantasy, but as a historically flexible rendition of historically significant truths relating to God's self-giving in the Person of the Son.

In the second section, Exemplification, Greene-McCreight, using Leviticus 14 and 16 – accounts of ceremonies of atonement – describes Barth's typological exegesis. Barth sees the whole of Scripture focused on the atoning power of God in and through the Person of Christ. The theme of divine election spans throughout Scripture, bringing an understanding that salvation is not the human act of appeasing God through correct ritual of religious expression, but that God elects all through the election of the Son who becomes the perfect mediator as well as redemptive sacrifice for the sake of the world. Further to this exposition, Grieb describes Barth's use of the Sermon on the Mount. Historically, the Sermon on the Mount has been

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seen as Jesus' teaching on how the Church should conduct itself. To Barth, however, the Sermon is used by Jesus to speak about himself. He *is* the Kingdom which the church should strive after. In Him, the principles of the Kingdom are found. Without Him, the Kingdom is simply not possible. Hunsinger moves to the epistles. Using Hebrews 13:8, he offers a key to understanding Barth's views of time and eschatology. In short, the consistency of God in time gives credence to the testimony of Scripture, as the accounts of witnesses encountering the one God in their contexts reflects a story of salvation whereby nothing in the created order can change the gift of God into something other than God's deliberate act of self-giving for the benefit of creation. Webster furthermore highlights Barth's views on the distinction between God and creation and what God is willing to do for the sake of reconciliation as Barth reflected on the Gospel according to John.

In the last section, Application, Molnar compares Barth to theologians such as McFague, Tillich and Heim. In an intriguing chapter, Molnar argues that Barth's approach to dogmatics (and to the reading of Scripture) places history in a suspended state, first noting that God is not a product of human intuition, invention or perspective. God is. From this premise, as creatures in a finite order, we encounter God in God's self-revelation. At best, our religion is an attempt to respond to God, but it can never become divine in itself. This places Barth's perspective in a creative tension against views offered by those listed, as context and identity for them are central to our experience and understanding of God. In the last chapter, Jones describes Barth's Christocentric use of Scripture. "The Word became flesh" is the central focal point of all of Scripture, without which Barth simply cannot make sense of what this unfolding testimony of God's self-revelation in the written word is about.

Three appendices by Barth are added to this publication, serving as examples of Barth's use of Scripture, particularly in the monumental work, *Church Dogmatics*.

The publication is truly a comprehensive overview of not only Barth's use and view of Scripture, but how his reading of Scripture formed his theological understanding – a perspective which has become one of the most profound theological voices in history.



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Loader W. 2013. *Making sense of sex: attitudes towards sexuality in early Jewish and Christian literature*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. vii + 168 pages. ISBN 978-0-8028-70957. Price: \$24.00; £16.99.

**Reviewer:** Prof Graham Duncan, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.

We live in days when issues of human sexuality have become an ecclesiastical obsession and everyone wants the church to declare a position as long as it agrees with their particular views. In the same-sex debate this means promoting a homophobic stance by any other name as long as right wing Christians get to determine what is normal using scripture as a guise. Here we have a volume that delivers us from such shallow and unreflective thinking. It is the product of many years of scholarly research and is a distillation of a five volume study of human sexuality in ancient Jewish (second Temple Judaism) and Christian sources (C3 BCE– C1 CE), demonstrating a high level of continuity, which is of service to the disciplines of Church History, Practical Theology and Biblical Studies. It presents the sources thematically, which makes referencing a joy for the reader. Ultimately, it reveals the depth of humanity/holiness through vulnerability. Hence it is a work of spirituality.

The author emphasises, correctly, from the outset that sex is integral to our being human and Christian, in both a personal and social sense. It links head and heart and, if we allow it to, draws out our deepest vulnerabilities in an intimate relationship. The first chapter focuses on Genesis and related texts from its local environment. The prime motif emerging here is not, in fact, sex but provides a reflection on violence and vulnerability in the world and the source of countering them. Sex is emphasised as part of the divine order of creation. The second chapter investigates the social milieu of the household and livelihood (community) by considering marriage arrangements, pre-marital arrangements, polygyny, inheritance, incest, love, public affairs, adultery, forbidden liaisons and divorce. The third chapter on sacred space picks up on the issues relating to impurity, celibacy and foreign marriage by taking account of the Jewish encounter with the Graeco-Roman world. Chapter four deals with the manner in which the Jews appropriated these concerns, particularly in large diaspora communities. In terms of sexual passions, belief in creation produces a positive response. Legitimacy is achieved by a combination of the procreative and companionship views of marriage; hence the inclusion of proper attitudes. Early writings here have contributed a great deal to our modern ethical outlook. The conclusion takes matters of distance and proximity into account. In terms of distance, we live in distinctly different societies within a vastly different cosmogony. With regard to proximity, we are faced with the common ground of restoration and reconciliation, forgiveness and healing under the idea of divine creation.

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The mystery of sexuality has been deconstructed and a variety of attitudes to sexuality have been revealed – not just one particular attitude. This presents a challenge to simplistic approaches to biblical hermeneutics. While few would read the five volumes which make up this research project, many will find this volume well referenced as well as distinctly accessible and readable. The author has succeeded in his quest to enhance awareness within a carefully researched historical context by allowing matters to be viewed from a considerable distance both in space and time and in proper social context. This is a book for thinkers who are open to be educated by the evidence and to be open to changing their minds and attitudes to matters of sexuality. It restores faith in the integrity of biblical and extra-biblical research on human sexuality.



Mannion, G & Mudge, LS. (eds.) 2008. *The Routledge companion to the Christian church*. Routledge: Abingdon. xx + 684 pages. ISBN 978-0-415-56768-8. No price quoted.

**Reviewer:** Prof Graham Duncan, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.

*The Routledge companion to the Christian church* offers an up to date and comprehensive approach to Ecclesiology for the 21st century and will most probably become a much relied upon reference and text book. It is written by an extensive and well chosen group of scholars who have an in-depth understanding of the church, its history and traditions, its theological development, current status with all its challenges and its potential role in the future. The contributors come from a diverse community of denominations and disciplines.

Mannion and Mudge introduce the subject by correctly referring to the topicality of ecclesiology as a subject which encompasses not only history but also practices, events, ideas and debates. They then discuss the meanings of the term related to numerous contexts in which it emerged and was used, always as community – Trinitarian and human. The book is in six sections – the church in its historical context, denominational traditions, global perspectives, methods and debates in ecclesiology, key concepts and themes (including authority, the *sensus fidelium*, laity, magisterium, governance and ministry, hermeneutics and mission) and ecclesiology and other disciplines. ‘Further reading’ lists are appended for those who wish to follow through on themes discussed.

It is impossible to reflect on each chapter so two will be selected for comment. The chapter on the Orthodox tradition is insightful and less well known than others considered here. Unlike the Latin western church with its

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penchant for precision, the Orthodox tradition eschews definitive expressions of its nature. Since the formation of the World Council of Churches, the Orthodox has been active participants in the ecumenical movement. The Orthodox tradition has contributed greatly to a more imaginative (and can we say, spiritual?) ecclesiology such as living temple, bride of Christ and body of Christ adhering to the universal marks of the church – unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity (with its peculiar stress on the “corporate continuity of Eucharistic communities” (p 165)). Closer relations with the Roman Catholics are both a present reality and future hope. Outside that relationship, further prospects are bleak without “a truly united church” (p 167) as a prerequisite. The Orthodox tradition, like many others, has been affected by migratory trends during the past century and has produced as yet unresolved tensions.

The late Steve de Gruchy and Sophie Chirongoma contribute a fascinating chapter on African ecclesiologies under the interaction of the themes of earth, water, fire and wind. These themes shape the character and witness of African Christianity. Africa is absolutely distinctive – the first port of call of Christianity outside the Holy Land, the largest growth of contemporary Christianity and diversity as we have never encountered it before. All traditions are represented, not the least of which is the exponentially growing Pentecostal tradition. This is indeed a continent where the steadfastness of African believers has borne testimony to the enduring influence of the Holy Spirit in the church.

In these days when church attendance, the voice of the church and its role in society are questioned, it must be remembered that there has never been a time in human history when the church has not exercised an influence for good and/or bad. Throughout the world and throughout its history it has been there and its very existence has been a challenge within the wider context of what is generally referred to as secular or general history. This book has a substantial contribution to make to ongoing ecumenical debate and praxis in a single volume and its authors have succeeded in being informative, reflective, stimulating and provocative.



McCance, Dawne 2009. *Derrida on religion: thinker of difference*. London: Equinox. ISBN 978-1-84553-275-8. 122pp. Price: Not known.

**Reviewer:** Prof Christina Landman, Research Institute for Theology and Religion, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.

The book introduces the philosopher, Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) not only as a thinker relevant to the study of religion, but as a “key thinker” in academic religious thought. The aim, and main achievement, of the book is to

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indicate how religion can and has benefitted from Derrida's concept of deconstruction in the light of the fact that the Western world has inherited its inclination towards hierarchical distinctions from Christianity.

The main part of the rather thin book consists of a discussion of ten key concepts which, according to the author of the book, connect Derrida to religious thought. They are deconstruction, phonocentrism, differance, trace, khôra, text, the impossible, hospitality, the messianic and auto-immunity.

This is a fairly representative choice of the concepts for which Derrida became famous; it is, however, rather "unfair" to access a philosopher's work by means of concepts only, and it also is a stretch to connect all these concepts to religious thinking. Precious, however, is McCance's deconstruction of the concept "deconstruction" in cases where the latter has been used in the sense of "anti-institutional". McCance explains deconstruction in terms of Derrida's own understanding, as "writing, that on the one hand, overturns hierarchical oppositions, 'brings low what was high', and that, on the other hand and in the same process, marks 'the irruptive emergence of a new concept', a concept that can no longer be, and never could be, included in the previous regime". McCance masterfully makes Derrida say that, as a "response-ability", deconstruction is anything but destructive. "Deconstruction is not an enclosure in nothingness, but an openness to the other."

Chapter 1, then, explains why the book focuses on Derrida's thinking vis-à-vis religion. Chapter 2 offers a short biography of Derrida, who was born in Algeria in 1930 and died in Paris in 2004. It also provides an overview of the work of Derrida who produced a vast output of works and acquired an influential reputation as philosopher.

Chapter 3 describes the ten key concepts mentioned above that enlightened Derrida's thinking on religion and Chapter 4 offers a courageous analysis of them. Incidentally, even more courage is expected from the reader to wade through the information and analyses in which concepts such as myth, faith and apocalypse are used in the deconstruction of institutionalised references. Typical of Derrida, the obscurity of thought is so revealing that it makes you blind, showing you your own ignorance – to use words "endemic" to Derrida.

Chapter 5 derives Derrida's religiosity from his answers to personalised questions in the field of religion. What is derived is a deconstruction of God, prayer and Jewishness. McCance deals with his derivations in a sensitive and informed way, with the underlying courage of taking Derrida's thought one step further than the context to which it originally responded.

Chapter 6 evaluates Derrida's contribution to the study of religion as one of enormous significance. Derrida, McCance claims, has blurred the boundaries between philosophy and religion, while his real contributions lie in academics drawing his thinking into postmodern (a) theologies, after God

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analyses, women's religious studies and civil obedience discourses ... spaces in which Derrida himself did not feel particularly comfortable.

McCance reminds us that, for Derrida, inheritance is never a given but always a task. In this sense the book does justice to Derrida's inheritance by tasking and enabling the reader to invite Derrida's thinking into the world where blindness of mind is commercialised and propagated as normal, a world that moreover has become inhospitable to the alien, the minority and the poor.

The book is not for relaxation. It is academic reading, but worthwhile academic reading for those interested not only in Derrida, but in the history of thought on deconstruction.



Mullett, Michael A. 2011. *John Calvin*. London & New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis. xiv +285 pages. ISBN 978-0-415-47698-0/7. No price quoted.

**Reviewer:** Prof Graham Duncan, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.

This is the latest in a series of biographies of John Calvin which goes a long way to simplify both the events of his life and work, and particularly his theological outlook. What is often missed is the thoroughly contextual nature of his theology. This is partly the result of time and the many and varied ways in which his theology has been used and abused and his life misunderstood. Yet he is a pivotal character standing at the close of the renaissance period and the beginning of the reformation era. His forceful and pastoral nature was vital ingredients in the mix that made up the powerful theologian and churchman who set an example for centuries to come.

The book follows a chronological scheme beginning with his early life experiences and influences, his entry into catechetical education through the writing of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, his early ministry and conflicts in Geneva, his retreat to Strasbourg, his second and longer ministry in Geneva, troubles he faced there, his approach to pastoral care, his biblical work, the establishment of the Academy and the completion of the *Institutes* and his ill health and death. The book concludes with chapters on Calvin's long term impact and his position in the wider prospect of his influence on history. In all of this the author does not underestimate the negative side of Calvin's character and his involvement in the case leading to Michael Servetus' death. His family life is treated sensitively but does not appear to have had a significant impact on him. Other influences were clearly more important, such as those with fellow reformers. Calvin's theological relation-

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ship with Martin Luther is particularly significant, no less because it is the author's particular field of expertise.

The book has a helpful chronological table, is very well illustrated, referenced and indexed.

What emerges here is a very human person of great sensitivity compared with the rather severe personality that is often presented to us. He was a workaholic driven by an extremely strong sense of purpose, a brilliant and expansive mind that cared deeply for the church and people God created. The sheer range and volume of his writings is almost unimaginable in terms of his outputs in theology, biblical studies and pastoral care.

This book can be set alongside John de Gruchy's excellent recent publication *John Calvin: Christian humanist and evangelical* (2009), which adopts a more thematic, yet no less comprehensive, approach. My own slight preference for teaching purposes would be for de Gruchy.



Mullett, Michael A. 2011. *John Calvin*. London & New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis. ISBN 978-0-415-47698-0/7. xiv + 285 pages. Price: Not quoted.

**Reviewer:** Prof Christina Landman, Research Institute for Theology and Religion, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

This is a delightfully readable book on a very serious issue: John Calvin, his life and his heritage. It is written by historian Michael Mullett as a retirement work after 40 years of teaching history at the University of Lancaster in the United Kingdom.

The book takes us chronologically – and not thematically – through the life and times of John Calvin, concluding with his heritage in the five centuries after his death. Although the book is faithfully contextual, the contents are organised around the writings of Calvin. Analyses of his works are given to show the development of his thinking as a reaction to the challenges of his contexts.

Although far from a *laudation*, the book vindicates Calvin on a variety of issues and historical situations. The first is his marriage. Mullett claims that it was happy in terms of companionship – and consummated. In a very interesting way Mullett proves this from Calvin's views on marriage as expressed in his writings. Secondly, Mullett points to Calvin and his encouragement of scientific enquiry, as opposed to the view that Calvin thought the world was flat and had scientists prosecuted. Thirdly, then, Calvin's attitude and leniency towards Servetus is emphasised, also contrarily to popular view.

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Because of the strict chronology of the book, it can serve as a reference book on Calvin's life and work. It is recommended for students and advanced academic readers.



Thompson, JT. 2012. *Light on darkness: missionary photography of Africa in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. xviii +285 pages. ISBN 978-0-8028-6524-3. No price quoted.

**Reviewer:** Prof Graham Duncan, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.

I last spoke to Jack Thompson when he was engaged in the research which led to this publication and he was excited about the prospect. Now we have the fruits of that research and a welcome addition to mission history. My personal memories of what were originally magic lantern shows comes from early regular visits to the gospel hall at my first school where, on a Friday evening, drawn by the lure of gifts of sweets, we were regaled with the gospel stories and slideshows of missionary work around the world. Little did I realise that this was one of the earliest influences in what became my missionary vocation though, at the time, it was certainly not part of my conscious plans for my life.

The author makes no claim to be comprehensive in his approach. He begins with an introduction to the history of photography and its missionary expression, which was by definition an amateur activity. Here he raises what for us are serious ethical issues. He then carefully selects and interrogates a variety of contexts in which photography sheds light on the missionary movement and its communication and marketing value. Drawing on his particular field of expertise, Thompson takes us through chapters on topics relating directly to the Scottish mission in Africa and how this was promoted. First he deals with Livingstone's Zambezi expedition in which the issue of stereotypes is discussed. The following case study centres on Stanley's "rediscovery" of Livingstone and its ideological promotion despite the absence of a photographic record. Here we see Livingstone, whose career was in the doldrums, rehabilitated by means of the visual impact of representations of the "historic" meeting. Thompson then proceeds to link the central African mission in a chapter linking South African to Malawian mission. The multi-level conversion is the subject of this chapter, which shows how transformation of Africans was used as a means of garnering further support for missions. A much more politically oriented chapter follows in which the atrocities of Leopold of Belgium's heartless treatment of labourers in the rubber trade are exposed. Heart-rending images were widely disseminated and became a major source of the campaign for humanitarian

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reform. The penultimate chapter focuses on the role of the magic lantern shows both on the mission field and as a means of propaganda, entertainment and fund-raising. This lasted until the 1930s, when more sophisticated technology provided more seemingly accurate visuals/impressions.

He concludes with a chapter in which he interrogates concepts adopted by photographers and philosophers of photography in the 20th century in relation to the visual activities of 19th century missionaries.

Thompson not only puts a face to missionary work – a face that many used to believe cannot lie – but he goes well beyond challenging the objectivity of the photographic enterprise. Let me demonstrate how easy it is to be misled by the camera. Until I read page 246 of the text, my eye told me that the man squatting in the lower right hand of the front cover was holding a cross – not so, it is a hammer! This book demonstrates that it is difficult to foresee the subliminal impact of the media on peoples' minds. Thompson has through thorough meticulous research and reflection provided a powerful introduction to new sources of historical and missiological insight as “new ways of seeing”. This book provides us with new ways of seeing into the past and adds to the variety of sources we have to produce a more comprehensive view of history.

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