

Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson, eds., *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul's Mission. In honour of Peter T. O'Brien* (Leicester: Apollos/Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2000), xiv+429 pages.

Peter T. O'Brien has long been recognized as one of the finest Evangelical New Testament scholars of our day. His 1977 volume on the introductory thanksgivings in the Pauline corpus, for example, is a standard in the study of Pauline prayer and piety. And it bears the hallmark common to his scholarship: the wedding together of 'academic work and the ministry of God's Word' (p.3). This volume of essays seeks to honour O'Brien on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday.

Along with an appreciation of O'Brien by Peter F. Jensen, there are twenty-three essays. Often in such a collection, the quality can vary considerably. This volume is exceptional in that the overall quality of the papers is high as they present a well-rounded picture of the Pauline mission and its long-term impact.

This reviewer especially found the following papers informative and edifying: Andrew Shead on 'The new covenant and Pauline hermeneutics,' an examination of the way Jeremiah 31 shapes Paul's interpretation of the new covenant; I. Howard Marshall's demonstration of the accuracy of the portrayal of Paul's mission in Acts; Donald A. Carson's examination of why Paul's prayers contain so little explicit reference to mission; Bruce Winter's study of the dangers that Paul had to face in his missionary labours; and Andreas S. Köstenberger's 'Women in the Pauline mission'.

One particularly fascinating paper is Peter Bolt's 'The philosopher in the hands of an angry God', which looks at the way Paul's preaching would have been received by Middle Platonism as typified in the thought of Plutarch (c.46-c.120). Unlike two other regnant philosophies of the first century A.D., Stoicism and Epicureanism, Middle Platonism affirmed the immortality of the soul. Despite this, however, Bolt shows the way Paul's gospel would have turned the worldview of Middle Platonism upside down, something the gospel did with so much else in the ancient world.

All in all, this is a most refreshing collection of studies of what is a paradigmatic mission for all who claim to be Christians.

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