

Boekbesprekings / Book Reviews

Galatians: 3:10-14 (pp 38-41); Romans 3:19-20, 4:4-8 and 9:11-12 (pp 41-47); on the issue of whether Paul broke with the law (pp 47-50); and the later writings of the Pauline corpus (pp 51-54). He adds a fourth section in which he deals with the question of whether Sanders' point of view is possibly an exaggeration (pp 55-63); whether justification by faith is complimented by some kind of a process (pp 63-72); the role of works in God's judgement upon believers (pp 72-80); and participation in Christ leading to transformation (pp 80-86).

This book should certainly be added to the libraries of all individuals and institutions with an interest in Pauline studies. Not all students across the world have access to the relevant journals and publications in which these articles originally appeared. Whether or not one agrees with Dunn in everything he proposes, or even as far as his main thesis is concerned, is beside the point. His position has become so prominent, articulated and influential, that no Pauline scholar can proceed without taking due cognizance of Dunn's perspective. The publishers and author should be thanked for providing in this need.



Glancy, J A 2006 – *Slavery in Early Christianity*

Publisher: Fortress. Paperback, 230 pages. Price: Unknown

Reviewer: Dr M Cromhout (Johannesburg)

In her introduction Glancy notes that her study "focuses on the impact of the ubiquitous ancient institution of slavery on the emergence and development of Christianity" (p 3). In this study, Glancy paints a grim picture of ancient slavery as she delves through various ancient sources, and explains what the normal dynamics between slave and slaveholder were like. Above all else, her sympathies and interest lie mainly with the circumstances of the slaves themselves. Taking into consideration that slavery was an established fact of life, Glancy investigates the early Christian texts to analyze their impact on the early church. What emerges is an understanding of the subject which is at the same time illuminating, and to our modern (Christian) sensibilities, quite alarming.

In the first chapter Glancy looks at the ancient rhetoric of slavery, and notes that slaves were often referred to as "the bodies". As mere "bodies", they were subject to being used pretty much according to the personal whims of their owners, something which extended even beyond the slave's manumission. This included physical and verbal abuse, as well as sexual penetration, since slaves had no control over their own bodies. Slaves could also act as surrogate bodies for their owners to accomplish various acts of violence on others. In addition, female slaves acted as wet-nurses and also expanded their owners' wealth if they nursed their own children. Generally, the gender specific liabilities of slaves placed them "outside the game of honor" (p 27). In addition to the realities mentioned above, male slaves endured the permanent status of a boy. Glancy also makes a brief study of spiritual slavery and somatic metaphors in Epictetus and Paul's Letter to the Galatians, which inter alia, are further indications of the physical abuse endured by slaves as well as the somatic liabilities that accompany servile status.

Chapter 2 focuses specifically on slavery in the Pauline churches. Since Pauline Christianity was an urban phenomenon, Paul's contact with slavery would have been mainly with the urban variety. Here Glancy questions the normal public/male and private/female spaces constructed by scholars. Apart from encountering slaves in the homes of those who offered him hospitality, Paul would have encountered slaves, including women, in public places and streets. Slaves were also found in every occupation in Greco-Roman cities. Some managed to organize a family life, although most lived under conditions that did not enable

them to sustain stable family connections. Drawing mainly on the Acts of the Apostles, she comes to the conclusion that slaves in Christian households were “dependent bodies subject to the intellectual and spiritual authority of slaveholders” (p 48). Slaveholders were at the same time the point of entry and enjoyed a higher profile within the church, playing the major role in the baptisms of their households.

Glancy then raises quite an interesting matter with regard to the Pauline communities. It involves the degree of participation of slaves in the church, as well as the meaning of *porneia*. In view of what Paul writes about *porneia* (sexual immorality) in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 and 1 Corinthians 5-7, she poses the following interesting questions: “In Paul’s understanding, could the Christian body accommodate the sexually available bodies of slaves? ... Or does the presence of urban, domestic slaves and slaveholders among the congregations of the Pauline orbit require that we revise our estimations of the Pauline definition of *porneia*, sexual impurity?” (p 50). She does indeed argue that we need to revise or modify commonly held positions in Pauline studies.

Firstly, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 instructs (male) Christians to abstain from *porneia* and for each one to “obtain his own vessel”. Most interpretations regard “vessel” as a euphemism for wife and so sexual activity is seen as restricted to marriage. But according to Glancy, this is not what Paul is saying. Since domestic slaves were considered as “morally neutral” outlets for sexual urges in the first century, those who heard Paul’s counsel “would understand it as consistent with reliance on slaves as morally neutral sexual outlets” (p 63). Thus, it cannot be assumed that later Christian rejection of the sexual use of slaves is already implicit in Paul’s letters. Nowhere does Paul issue explicit prohibitions on slaveholders’ sexual use of slaves. True, but taking into consideration the conservative Israelite ethic towards sexuality, is this what Paul *himself* actually *meant* by the instruction? – As far as I can tell, Glancy does not say so. But a similar uncertainty basically confronts us in her analysis of 1 Corinthians 5-7.

In her study of 1 Corinthians 5-7, Glancy suggests that Paul’s teaching on *porneia* and what it exactly means, remains unclear. Would slaves who submitted to the demands of their owners be considered among the *pornoi*? And do sexual relations between slaves and their owners fall in the category of *porneia*? In 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Paul forbids *porneia* (sexual immorality/prostitution) as it taints the Christian body and he rejects the idea that sexual intercourse could be a matter of moral indifference or could be morally neutral. This according to Glancy seems to exclude enslaved prostitutes outside the boundaries of Christianity. In 1 Corinthians 7:1-24, where Paul limits sexual activity to marriage, it implicitly suggests that slaves who oblige their masters engage in *porneia* (and can one add, by implication, Christian “masters” as well, which will complicate her analysis of 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 discussed above?). Glancy concludes: “We simply do not know how Paul responded to the situation of slaves who were used sexually by their owners. Perhaps, however, concern over this vulnerability prompted him to advise slaves to take advantage of opportunities for freedom as they arose [cf 7:1]” (p 69). This leads her to conclude that it is impossible to maintain that the servile status of slaves was no obstacle for full participation in the Christian body *and* that the only sexual relations tolerated were those between husband and wife (p 70).

Glancy’s analysis does leave one with more answers than questions, specifically in terms of how exactly commonly held positions in Pauline studies need to be revised or modified, but she appropriately points out that “a society that represented and treated slaves as bodies, ecclesial incorporation of slaves would have exposed the body of Christ to the somatic vulnerabilities of enslaved members” (p 70).

Chapter 3 investigates the margins, how free bodies were enslaved during the early centuries of Christianity, or how the sale, escape, and manumission of slaves occurred in the Roman slave system. At the same time Glancy looks at the “rhetorical effects of uneasiness” (p 73) thus engendered in early Christian theological discourse. Glancy notes that the sources of slaves were babies born to enslaved women, infants being exposed, and people taken as

booty in war. Alternatively, free persons were abducted and sold as slaves, or people sold themselves into slavery (cf 1 Cor 7:22-24), a practice that went against “all sense of propriety and decency” (p 85). On the whole, the ancient system of slavery operated within early Christianity pretty much as an institution as it did within the rest of society. For example, slaves had to be controlled. Most of the metal slave collars we have are post-Constantinian, and even bear Christian iconography, such as the alpha and omega or the chi-rho figure! She notes variously that “the Torah’s insistence that runaway slaves deserve protection does not seem to have permeated early Christian sensibilities or customs” (p 92), and that “Christians seem to have had neither a special affinity for nor antipathy toward the manumission of slaves” (pp 95-96).

Throughout early theological discourse, metaphors of enslavement, sale, and liberation occur, and thus depended on and reinscribed the ancient social relations of the slave system. The most famous example she discusses is the Christ hymn in Philippians. The impact of the hymn depends on the feared and uncomfortable “boundary crossing” between high/free status and low/slave status, and free persons’ fear of not being in control of their own bodies and the forced reduction to the vulnerable position of slaves (pp 100-101). “The Christ hymn depends on recognition of the shocking humiliation and definitive vindication of one who originally and ultimately bore a God likeness” (p 101).

Chapter 4 looks at the figure of the slave in the sayings of Jesus. So what was Jesus’ attitude towards the institution of slavery? This chapter includes an overview of Mark, Thomas, John, Luke with Matthew in particular receiving extensive treatment. Overall, the figure of the slave features rather prominently in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, which may also imply that it featured prominently in Q. It also implies that Jesus’ audience was familiar with the world of slaveholding and enslavement. Indeed, the distribution of slave sayings and parables throughout the trajectories of the Jesus tradition “leaves no doubt that he [Jesus] routinely deployed the trope of slavery” (p 107). According to Glancy also, “[i]n the parables of Jesus, the bodies of slaves are vulnerable to abuse. Beaten, stoned, and executed, the figure of the parabolic slave is repeatedly the locus of corporal discipline and other bodily violations” (p 103). This is especially true for the Gospel of Matthew. This form of violence to the bodies of slaves, Glancy maintains, Biblical scholars have been reluctant to acknowledge, rather focussing on their wealth and influence exercised by the slave owners. Some even deny that *douloi* in the parables mean “slaves”. She also criticizes the way in which some scholars treat slavery in the Jesus tradition as a subset of patron-client relations (p 115, 122-26), or the attempts they try to make to find a challenge in the “original” Jesus sayings to imperial values (pp 126-28). “What may ultimately be most challenging to New Testament critics is to confront the degree to which the slave parables undergird the horizon of normalcy and reinforce other evidence concerning the practice and ideology of slavery in the early Roman Empire” (p 128). Thus, we may conclude that, based on Glancy’s analysis, we find no challenge to the institution of slavery in Jesus’ parables and sayings. What we rather encounter, is that Jesus used these slave sayings because slavery was ubiquitous in the world he had lived in.

The final chapter looks at slaveholding culture in the early church, taking into consideration that, generally speaking, the slave character was inherently suspect and the management of their conduct always posed a problem. So how did early Christians manage their slaves? Glancy provides an overview of the household codes in Colossians, Ephesians, the Pastoral Epistles, 1 Peter, the Didache, and Ignatius’ letter to Polycarp. Again, what Glancy finds, is no overt countercultural teaching. In all of these texts slaves are called to obedience and Polycarp also seeks to limit or eliminate the reliance on church funds for the manumission of slaves. According to Glancy the household codes provide an articulation of a theological basis for the submission of slaves (Colossians & Ephesians) and the view that slaveholder morality is compatible, if not synonymous with Christian morality (The Pastorals). Generally, slave owners were not prohibited to inflict corporal punishment, neither to use

slaves as sexual outlets. If this was indeed the case, why did the authors not reinforce this teaching? – so Glancy maintains. 1 Peter is slightly different in that it states that the suffering of abuse (like Jesus suffered) – even from slave owners who act with cruelty – earns the commendation of God (1 Pt 2:18-21). Therefore, 1 Peter is distinct insofar as it “offers ground for condemning the system of slavery by inviting comparisons between the abuse of slaves and the passion of Jesus” (p 150), and Christian identity is associated with the very violation of slave bodies.

This work is highly recommended for anyone who is interested in the subject matter, as it both offers background knowledge of ancient slavery in its interaction with a variety of ancient sources, and provides valuable insight into how it inevitably influenced early Christian communities. Glancy’s study on the Pauline churches needs to be resolved, however, especially in terms of what Paul meant by *porneia*. Nevertheless, her study raises various issues pertaining to the field of New Testament ethics, and from a social-scientific perspective, she clearly demonstrates how the first believers in Jesus lived in a world with cultural sensibilities and value systems very different to our own. This is another reminder of the “culture shock” (to paraphrase Bruce Malina) any reader of the New Testament should experience.



Heither, T & Reemts, C 2007 – *Biblische Gestalten bei den Kirchenvätern: Adam* (Biblische Gestalten bei den Kirchenvätern)

der Verlag: Aschendorff 334 S., 36 €, ISBN 978-3-402-04387-5

der Rezensent: Prof Dr Christoph Stenschke (Missionshaus Bibelschule Wiedenest – Germany and Professor extraordinarius, University of South Africa)

Die vorliegende Studie ist der zweite Band in der neuen Serie *Biblische Gestalten bei den Kirchenvätern*, die sich dem patristischen Verständnis biblischer Gestalten widmet. Der erste Band zu Abraham war 2005 erschienen. Dabei ist es das Ziel, "die Art und Weise, wie die großen Theologen der frühen Christenheit die Bibel lasen, vorzustellen und so zu einer geistlichen Schriftauslegung in unserer Zeit Anregungen zu geben" (6). Den Lohn solcher Beschäftigung beschreiben die Autorinnen wie folgt:

Für die Kirchenväter ist die Bibel Quelle und Ziel jeder Freude, jeder Schönheit, aber auch jeder denkerischen Bemühung. Ihre Werke sprechen von der Faszination, die von der Bibel ausgeht und der man sich, einmal davon gepackt, nicht mehr entziehen kann. Dadurch leiten sie auch ihre Leser an, die Bibel zu lesen, sie neu zu lesen, sie wieder und wieder zu lesen und in ihr die Begegnung mit Gott zu suchen. Die Beschäftigung mit ihrer Theologie zwingt uns, gerade weil sie uns in vielem fremd ist und unsere Plausibilitäten nicht teilt, unser Selbstverständnis und unsere Denkgewohnheiten zu hinterfragen und zu neuen Fragen vorzustoßen (6).

Das Vorwort (11-13) umreißt die altkirchliche Bedeutung Adams: "Adam wird in der patristischen Theologie große Aufmerksamkeit gewidmet, ja man kann sagen, dass er für die Väter eine der ganz zentralen biblischen Gestalten ist. An ihm, dem ersten Menschen, kann man ablesen, was Menschsein bedeutet, er ist Maßstab, Vorbild und zugleich warnendes Beispiel für alle seine Nachfahren, und – das ist für christliche Theologie entscheidend wichtig – Typos des 'zweiten Adam', Jesus Christus" (11). Dabei geht es um Adam als den Menschen am Anfang, nicht aber um Adam als den Menschen überhaupt.