

**James D.G. DUNN, *Jesus according to the New Testament*;
foreword by Rowan WILLIAMS. Grand Rapids MI, Wm.B.
Eerdmans, 2019, 14 × 21,5 cm, xv-211 p., ISBN 978-0-8028-7669-0**

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own understanding on the text and the desire to separate the world of the story from their own world to make it foreign. If so, this book is a great success!

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James D.G. DUNN, **Jesus according to the New Testament**; foreword by Rowan WILLIAMS. Grand Rapids MI, Wm.B. Eerdmans, 2019, 14 × 21,5 cm, xv-211 p., ISBN 978-0-8028-7669-0.

The central theme of this book is about the experiences that the different writers of the letters (and books) of the NT have about Jesus, hence the expression: "Jesus according to...." Even the first chapter that has the caption: "Jesus according to Jesus," is still based on the reports of the evangelists about what Jesus did or said. It is basically about what the first Christians remembered about Jesus and the influence he impacted on their lives both as individuals and as communities.

The author of this book, James D.G. Dunn (henceforth: JD), addresses this discussion under three headings: lessons learned from Jesus, distinctive features of Jesus's ministry and Jesus's own self-understanding. He enumerates basic elements that Jesus taught and left for his followers, these include the love command expressed in the love of neighbour and enemies; priority of the poor which was evident among the first Christians; welcoming of sinners; inclusion of women in his ministry and the Lord's supper.

In his ministry, Jesus preached the kingdom of God, a prominent feature mentioned more than 50 times in the tradition common to the first three written gospels. Teaching using parables was another distinctive feature of his ministry. This means of teaching was not common in passing on tradition within Judaism, but no fewer than forty-six parables were attributed to Jesus in the shared tradition of the gospels. Jesus was regarded as a parabolist. Other distinctive features noted by JD include exorcism, concentration on Galilee and submission to high priestly authorities. The characteristics that identify Jesus's self-understanding include his baptismal commission which he attested to in order to fulfill all righteousness; the phrase "I was sent" or "I came"; appellations such as messiah/Christ; Son of Man (the expectation of his death and his vindication); the Son of God (but this terminology is difficult to say that Jesus was reported to have made use of it to refer to himself in the NT, it was rather the term Son of Man that he was reported to have used; however, he was remembered as the Son of God).

In chapter two, JD discusses Jesus according to the synoptic gospels. He shows the similarities of the three gospels about the identity of Jesus while noting their distinctive features. The synoptic gospels show that the tradition of Jesus was preserved among the first Christian communities before the writing began. They are presented in different ways but with similar evidence, what JD describes as "the same yet different."

The writings show, firstly, the impact Jesus made on his first disciples and secondly the different ways Jesus's memories and ministry were transmitted to the

future disciples and the emerging churches. The term 'gospel' was used by Mark in a technical Christian sense as the story of Jesus's ministry. The manner of telling the story of Jesus unveils the messianic secret. For the Synoptics, Jesus fulfills the Jewish expectation, focuses on Israel but opens to the gentiles, reaffirms the law, mission to sinners, frequent in prayer, and involvement of women in his ministry. They present Jesus as the Lord. They all present the same Jesus but powerfully impact different people and different situations.

JD points out the "I am sayings" in the Gospel of John to be unique among the four gospels. The question is, since the sayings are found in the fourth gospel, are they part of Jesus's tradition? Was Jesus remembered for saying "I am"? JD opines that those sayings were attributed to Jesus by John following the latter's interpretations of Jesus and the significance of his ministry and miracles. John's gospel is more of a reflection on Jesus's ministry than just recounting his stories as found in the other three (synoptic) gospels. For John, Jesus is the Messiah: he is the only writer in the NT that uses the Greek term *Messias* (1:41; 4:25) and regularly uses the Greek translation *Christos*. Jesus is the Son of God who addresses God as his father 100 times in John's gospel alone. It is only the fourth gospel that refers to Jesus as God's "one and only Son" (1:14, 18; 3:16, 18). Jesus is also the divine Word and divine Wisdom.

The understanding of Jesus according to the Acts of the Apostles is embedded in the sermons found in the book. The Pentecost speech retains the primitive idea of imminent expectation with the apocalyptic imagery of cosmic convulsion. Acts' Christology takes on the primitive sense: "the personal name, 'Jesus the Nazarene' (2:22), 'this Jesus' (2:36)... Jesus is 'a man attested to you by God'. What he did was described as 'signs that God did through him' (2:22). The Messiah is still a title (2:31), whereas elsewhere in the NT it has become more or less a proper name, 'Jesus Christ'" (p. 81-82). Jesus is further identified in Acts as the bestower of the Spirit consequent upon his exaltation (2:33). He is Lord and Messiah (2:36). Jesus is generally portrayed as the resurrected One and the promise of forgiveness, salvation, and Spirit to those who respond to him.

Paul focuses on Jesus' death and resurrection more than his life prior to these. His death is the atonement for sins while his resurrection is a sure promise of salvation. For Paul, Jesus is the wisdom of God, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption for humanity. The gospel of Christ is also for the gentiles.

Spirit is one of the major themes in Paul. JD points this out but thinks that when Paul refers to "the spirit of Christ" it means the Holy Spirit: "Paul could think of the Holy Spirit as Christ's Spirit" (p. 127). Is this interpretation correct in Paul? Does the Holy Spirit equate to the spirit of Christ? If JD's assertion is correct, then it needs to be demonstrated and clarified. In Paul, one could observe that the Holy Spirit acts as an Agent and is not fussed with Christ. There appears to be a carry-over of the usage of the "spirit of God (Yahweh)" of the OT in the NT with the designation "spirit of Christ." It is inadequate to make such an assertion without buttressing it.

In chapter seven, JD discusses Jesus according to Hebrews. The letter to the Hebrews portrays Jesus as wisdom. It sees both wisdom and *logos* as ways of speaking about God's action in the world of space and time. Jesus is the Son of God, yet he shares fully the reality and frailness of humankind; he is the high priest, priest according to the order of Melchizedek, not by physical descent "but through the

power of an indestructible life" (7:16). For JD, part of the contents of Hebrews means that there is no need for priests after that of Christ because Jesus's priesthood has broken all mediation, opened the way to God, and that worshipers no longer need priests to play an intermediary role (p. 151, 154). This stand of JD seems not to be clearly demonstrated. It needs precision on what role is not needed or that the letter to the Hebrews was discarded by the priesthood of Jesus. It will be interesting to give more detail on this aspect.

Jesus according to the Catholic Epistles recalls and draws on Jesus's teaching and its influence and impacts on the believing communities and how to live according to the teaching. JD observes that "the teaching of Jesus was not retained in strictly controlled formulation but was evidently reflected on, elaborated, and applied in the changing situations of the early Christian communities" (p. 171).

The book of Revelation presents Jesus as the Exalted One, the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the holy one, the fulfillment of Israel's messianic hopes. Also, Jesus is the lamb of God with 28 references. Since Revelation is apocalyptic literature in response to crises at the time, JD notes that "one thing which really matters, in terms of Christology, is that in John's visions Jesus was seen again and again as the key to making sense of the crises confronting the churches and as at the center of the hope for a successful resolution of these crises" (p. 186).

At the end of the chapters, JD suggests that individual Christians could write about their personal experiences, encounters, and testimonies about Jesus with a similar title to his book: "Jesus according to...."

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Nicholas Thomas WRIGHT, **History and Eschatology: Jesus and the Promise of Natural Theology** (The 2018 Gifford Lectures). Waco TX, Baylor University Press, 2019, 16 × 23,5 cm, xxi-343 p., ISBN 978-1-4813-0962-2.

The author, N.T. Wright (from now on: NTW) argues against the background of the modern period and opts for the inclusion of the Bible and the story of Jesus in natural theology. He points out that the Bible, after all, was written and edited within the world of space and time by individuals within human and natural communities. In addition, the Bible does not only talk about spiritual and theological teachings but also about natural and human events. And Jesus was a human being who lived within the natural world with history. He further notes that the last three centuries through political, cultural and social contexts of western thought had damaged several crucial theological enquiries, including early Christian eschatology, through the use of modern variations of ancient Epicureanism. NTW opines that the discussions surrounding natural theology were distorted in certain ways by the cultural and political trends of the 18th and 19th centuries. These distortions led to many flaws. He then proposes that there is a need to go back to the historical study of Jesus in his 1st