

attempts to restrain it were native to the Greco-Roman world; both are also evident in Paul. Attending more carefully to this complexity may provide additional resources for addressing the probing questions Zerbe poses about contemporary ecclesial citizenship (179-80, 212-13, 269-71). Still, this is a very helpful volume that admirably fulfills the aims of the Believers Church Bible Commentary series.

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Matthew Thiessen. *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

In a carefully argued study, Matthew Thiessen asserts that Paul, a Jewish apostle to gentiles, had no bone to pick with Torah or with Judaism, but rather with gentiles who wished to be Jewish. Paul insisted not only that gentiles need not be Jewish to be included in God's blessing but that it is by divine decree impossible for them to be Jewish. However, God overcomes the "genealogical gap" between Jews and gentiles by bestowing *pneuma* (usually translated as "Spirit") on them "in Christ." Gentiles thereby not only become Abraham's "genealogical" offspring (seed), and thus partakers in the promise to Abraham, but are given the power to overcome the "gentile problem," namely, an impious and immoral life. Christ-believing Jews remain Jews, and Christ-believing gentiles remain gentiles, with distinct genealogical connection to Abraham.

In five meticulously argued and copiously endnoted chapters, amply sourced in biblical, Jewish, and Greco-Roman literature, Thiessen focuses primarily on Romans and Galatians. There Abraham figures centrally in Paul's argument, particularly the themes of faith (trust), promise, "seed," and the blessing of the nations/gentiles (Genesis 16-21). Importantly, the "encoded" readers addressed in both Romans 2 and Galatians 3-4, for example, are *not* Jews, Thiessen insists against much of exegetical and theological opinion, but *only* judaizers—gentile wannabe Jews. Paul never takes aim at the law per se, nor at Judaism, but only at a fundamental misreading of the divine "solution"

to the “gentile problem,” in which gentiles want to become Jewish in order to participate in the blessing. With this claim, Thiessen rejects the “Lutheran” or “anti-legalist” take on Paul, which sees the problem as the unlivable and thus death-bringing law, works-righteousness, and Jewish legalism.

Thiessen also finds fault with the so-called “new perspective” or “anti-ethnocentric” reading of Paul, identified commonly with James Dunn and N.T. Wright, where the problem is not law but genealogical exclusivity. Thiessen argues that Paul never questions the need for Jews to be faithful to the Torah, nor the genealogical exclusivity of being Jewish, insisting (against many of his more hospitable Jewish contemporaries) that conversion itself is impossible. However, and here Paul’s use of the Abraham narrative becomes critical, just as God was able to supply a “seed” for Abraham through no work on Abraham’s part (Isaac), so now through Christ, both Abraham’s promised seed and divine Son, God again creates a genealogical connection for gentiles. God does so by granting them the *pneuma*, which renders them both genealogically connected and empowered to live righteous and holy lives, thus participating already in the assured future as transformed heavenly pneumatic beings (the stars of heaven).

Thiessen dubs this view of Paul’s gospel the “radical new perspective,” finding closest affinity with Stanley Stowers, Lloyd Gaston, and John Gager. At the same time, Thiessen readily admits that this perspective is neither “radical” nor “new,” as it is anticipated in the Acts of the Apostles. Better then, he suggests, to identify it as “*Paul within Judaism*,” not Paul *against* Judaism, even if many of Paul’s Jewish contemporaries would have rejected his gospel with its mix of Jewish exclusivism and radical hospitality to gentiles as gentiles.

This reviewer substantially agrees with much in Thiessen’s “conjuring” of Paul. He has added valuably to the growing body of scholarship that views Paul as a *Jewish* emissary to the gentiles, and to a revisiting of the relationship between the variegated Judaism of Paul’s day and what became Christianity. In addition, his exploration of *pneuma*, seed, and stars is startling.

Given its radical and innovative quality, Thiessen’s study also raises questions. For example, just how did Paul imagine that Jews and gentiles who were to remain such would live and worship together? Or did he expect the “day of liberation” (Rom. 13:11) to come so soon that such questions

could be relationally finessed in the remaining days with the exhortation to “welcome each other as Christ has welcomed you” (Rom. 15:7)? Second, with respect to the deutero-Pauline Ephesians, contemporaneous with Acts, would Thiessen see Eph. 2:11-22 to be a betrayal or an affirmation of Paul’s gospel? There we find both a recognition of Jewish and gentile identities but, more important, a celebration of a Christ who is “our Peace,” who breaks down the wall of division (the law) and creates in himself “one new human” out of “both.” Such questions do not point to inadequacy in Thiessen’s work, but to the rich and weighty questions his excellent exploration invites.

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C. Arnold Snyder, ed. *Later Writings of the Swiss Anabaptists, 1529-1592*. Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2017.

In this volume published as part of the *Anabaptist Texts in Translation and Classics of the Radical Reformation* series, Arnold Snyder makes available in English (and, in some cases, in print for the first time in any language) a wealth of documents related to the 16th-century Anabaptist group known as the Swiss Brethren. The documents in *Later Writings of the Swiss Anabaptists* span a variety of genres from letters and court records to apologetic writings and hymnal prefaces. Together, they shed light on the theology and practice of the Swiss Brethren in different times and places in the 16th century.

The earliest precisely dated documents in this volume (Chapter II) relate to the work of Wilhelm Reublin, who in the course of his ministry was active in the Zurich area, the imperial city of Strasbourg, and Moravia. They highlight his relationships with other Anabaptists, including the spiritualist Anabaptist Jakob Kautz, Pilgram Marpeck, and members of the Austerlitz community. Chapters V, VI, and XV also deal with interactions between the Swiss Brethren and other Anabaptist groups; Chapters V and VI concern disagreements with Dutch Mennonites over the Incarnation and the ban, while Chapter XV reveals disagreements between the Swiss Brethren and the