

tive of Peacocke, she presents her own version of what she refers to as a ‘three-fold panentheism,’ which includes the notion of emergence and that humans are both similitudes and images of God. Her diagram of all this in the book is useful and offers a helpful picture of her perspective. Runehov suggests, in conclusion, that whether and how God acts in the world are questions of belief.

I highly recommend this book. The subject matter is fascinating and the interdisciplinary and holistic approach is welcome, especially considering the unfortunate penchant for reductionism and isolationism in numerous disciplines today. Runehov, and I applaud her for doing so, is dealing with some of the cutting edge issues of our times in an interesting and provocative manner.

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Paul’s Graeco-Roman Context

C. Breytenbach, ed.
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Paul’s Graeco-Roman Context is an impressive volume of essays, which are written in several languages, including French, German, and English, edited by Cilliers Breytenbach and published by Peeters in 2015. The context for these papers was a conference: the 62nd *Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense* at Université Catholique de Louvain, 16-18 July 2013, which comprised an international group of scholars.

In order to write this review in a timely and efficient manner, I shall only comment on a selection of the main papers in the book, though all these contributions, in addition to the offered papers, merit serious attention and each sheds further

light on this important and stimulating topic.

For at least the last two decades research into the times, cultures, and literary repertoire of the apostle Paul has intensified and flourished. The recent work, *Paul’s Graeco-Roman Context*, makes a sterling contribution to exploring these issues more deeply. Having a clearer picture of Paul’s context and how this may have influenced him, the authors argue, is essential to a better understanding of his writings.

In her essay, “Paul et l’émergence d’un monde ‘greco-romain,’: Reflexions sur la romanité de l’apôtre,” M.-F. Baslez discusses Paul’s Romanization. Following P. Veyne, she first of all argues that “greco-romain” cultures should not be perceived as juxtaposed, but rather in the process of being intertwined into a new identity. Further, she suggests that more recent research has brought to light the force of mediators, which to varying degrees were shaping and forging the communities of Empire. Paul, therefore, in her view, finds himself in the midst of a confluence of a political, social, and religious environment in transition. His unfolding Romanization develops through contact with the way Rome did things administratively and geopolitically, as evidenced by the use of similar terminology in his letters. Baslez contends, for example, that as the older Greek view of localities and divergent people groups was now changing, the picture of a universal and unified Empire was coming more sharply into focus. This shift influenced Paul’s vision of the world, which had salient implications for both his theology and ecclesiology.

J.C. Thom addresses the topic of “Paul and Popular Philosophy,” arguing that a philosophical climate would have been

embedded in Paul's cultural context and influenced his writings to some extent. Thom is careful to point out that it is indeed difficult to defend the notion that Paul read philosophy or was taken by one particular philosophical agenda, which stamps all his letters. Popular philosophy, normally viewed as a type of non-technical moral philosophy in this cultural context, Thom contends, is inadequate. He appeals to several texts to make the case for a fuller more complex picture that includes such matters as geography, the cosmos, and science. Building off this, Thom offers three *topoi* for a comparative analysis between these texts and the New Testament, with a specific focus on Paul's letters.

In his piece, "Paul and Ancient Civic Ethics: Redefining the Canon of Honour in the Graeco-Roman World," J.R. Harrison explores virtue, honour, and shame in the first - second century CE. Harrison shows how deeply engrained the honour system of civic elites and those wanting to make a good name were during this time. He maintains that Paul endorses this cultural atmosphere, but points it in another direction. In Harrison's opinion, Paul subverts the norm. It is not the civic elite, nor a counterfeit performance that counts, but it is God who is the impartial judge of all actions. Through a rich semantic analysis Harrison demonstrates how this contrast works out. In his opinion, Paul takes the contemporary terminology and deftly uses it for his own theological and ethical purposes, which go far beyond a Graeco-Roman honorific society.

D. Konstan, in his paper, "Regret, Repentance, and Change of Heart in Paul: *Metanoia* in Its Greek Context," deals with the terms *metanoia* and *metameleia* in classical Greek and in the New

Testament. He argues that on the semantic register this terminology has been subject to a fair amount of misunderstanding in both contexts. Konstan works through a selection of texts to clarify the meaning and contends that it is not so much remorse (although this may occur rarely), but a change of mind. He claims, whether in Paul's writings, the New Testament more widely, or in classical Greek, that the acceptance of another view did not necessarily carry with it a profound sense of regret or sadness about the past since the predominant semantic emphasis in all these contexts was on the turn towards and embrace of the new belief.

The contribution by C. Coulot, "La première lettre aux Thessaloniens dans son contexte gréco-romain," argues that throughout Paul's letter to Thessalonica he makes numerous allusions to the everyday environment of the Graeco-Roman world. Such topics include imitation, idols, family life, and work. Paul also touches, more theologically, on mission, sanctification, and resurrection, which also already had previous echoes in the broader cultural context. He reminds, demands, and exhorts his readers through a mutually shared repertoire of daily life to see the radical difference it makes to have given up paganism, and become Christians. Coulot points out that Paul's anti-Jewish polemic, yet his appeal to the Jewish scriptures in this letter raises the intriguing question of who its addressees really are.

M. Quesnel examines two debatable passages: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 and 14:34-36, in his paper "Le contexte gréco-romain des séjours de Paul à Corinthe: La place des femmes dans l'assemblée." He first situates 11:2-16 in its literary context and then examines the Jewish and Graeco-Roman cultural envi-

ronments. Quesnel goes on to explore the structure of the passage, after which he proposes two possible interpretations: the traditional that argues this is discussing veils and the contemporary, which contends that it's about hairstyles. For Quesnel it's difficult to decide between these. The major take away however, he suggests, is that women could pray and prophesy out loud in the ecclesial assembly in Corinth. But this appears to set up a conflict with the second text in 14:34-36 that affirms women should be silent (interpolation or original?). In order to attempt to decode this passage Quesnel follows a somewhat similar direction as previously, then offers a hypothesis and possible solution.

The famous 'I' of Paul in Romans is the subject of S. Byrskog's essay, "Adam and Medea – and Eve. Revisiting Romans 7:7-25." Byrskog investigates the potential acquaintance of Paul with the story of Medea; a tragedy written by Euripides, and well known in Greek and Roman contexts. He discusses the state of research, showing that current scholarship contends that *Medea* may have indeed been one of the possible influences on the apostle. Be that as it may, Byrskog goes on to point out the rightful attention, in his view, also given to a Jewish dimension of 'I', but suggests that interpreters have tended to be too exclusively focused on either the Greek and Roman or the Jewish repertoire. Medea, Adam, and Eve, in Byrskog's opinion, all have a role to play in Romans 7. His paper furthers this line of exploration, while drawing out similarities and differences between Adam and Eve, and Medea. He argues that Paul's Jewish, Greek, and Roman heritage contribute to the construct and likely identity of the mysterious 'I.'

A second entry that deals with this

Romans passage is pursued by A. Pitta, "The *Poetics* of Aristotle and the Hermeneutics of Romans 7:7-25. Towards a New Interpretation?." Pitta is interested in examining the Graeco-Roman context of *akrasia* – human powerlessness between good and evil, and how this might relate to the tragic in Aristotle's *Poetics*. According to Aristotle, plot and mimesis are two pillars central to tragedy. Pitta argues that whether or not Paul was aware of *Poetics*, the text is still essential in his cultural context for better understanding tragedy or a tragic condition. He explores these markers, underscored by Aristotle, in respect to Romans 7, and then spends several pages unpacking the identity of the notorious 'I,' sins/sin, and thanksgiving and despair, interacting concerning the latter more particularly with accounts of Medea. The tragic problem of human *akrasia* remains severe. How Paul deals with it, in Pitta's estimation, is a brilliant move by the apostle.

J.T. Fitzgerald explores the topic of "Paul, Wine in the Ancient Mediterranean World, and the Problem of Intoxication." His paper traces out the ancient origins of wine, to it becoming an industry in the Graeco-Roman period. In this context, wine, Fitzgerald argues, was part of life. Pagans, Jews, and Christians all imbibed. Fitzgerald then turns to investigate the implications of this; the when, where, and why of wine consummation and in particular intoxication, before examining the Pauline writings more thoroughly. He highlights five connections between these and the general cultural context, raising the question of potential links between excessive drinking and other problems in the communities the apostle writes on this subject.

The topic that R. Bieringer examines is titled, "Présence dans l'absence du Corps.

Constructions de la Présence et de l'absence de Paul en 2 Corinthiens dans la Perspective des Épîtres Pauliniennes et du Monde Grec." After a brief state of the research, Bieringer delves into the issue of presence and absence via Greek texts. He compares his findings with 1 Corinthians and Philipians, before doing so in a more detailed fashion with 2 Corinthians. Bieringer argues that Paul's use of this antithesis, in contrast to some writings in the wider Graeco-Roman context, shows he does not suggest that his letters are to be a substitute for his physical presence/absence. Paul, in Bieringer's estimation, points out that his real presence is similar to that found in his writings. Though Bieringer maintains this issue is in need of much fuller research, he sees his contribution to be a first step in this direction.

This is a marvelous collection of essays and Peeters is to be commended for publishing them. We owe a debt of gratitude to each author. Our understanding of Paul's writings and his Graeco-Roman context has been substantially enriched by this volume.

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Doubt, Faith & Certainty

Anthony C. Thiselton

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This book is another valuable contribution from the prolific pen of theologian Anthony Thiselton. The author's skills in exegesis, hermeneutics, and philosophical theology suit him well for interacting with these topics, which are among the most often debated in both theistic and atheistic circles.

Thiselton begins in chapter one with a brief, but useful discussion of the variety of meanings of doubt, faith, and certainty.

He argues that all these *realities* are frequently misunderstood, notably in popular Christian thought, which tends to assume that doubt, faith, and certainty each have one meaning. Drawing from the biblical text, philosophers, linguists, and theologians, the author makes a good case for a contextual diversity of meanings that seems closer to the truth. Doubt, for example, is not always to be taken negatively, let's say as a contrast to belief, but it can be viewed positively, since it also can refer to humility or deep reflection. The same type of argument for a plurality of meanings is made for faith. Thiselton convincingly shows the polysemy found in the biblical text (no less than 13 variations of faith) and historical theology, but underscores by appealing to Wittgenstein that there is some notion here of "family resemblances." As far as certainty goes, the author contends, it is equally varied and diverse in meaning as doubt and faith. Whether in the New Testament or in philosophical discussions a multiplicity of meanings for certainty can be discovered in numerous contexts.

After these initial claims at the outset of the book, Thiselton goes on to deal with each *reality* in greater detail. Chapters two and three tackle doubt. Chapter two is entitled Doubt and Skepticism. Beginning with the Ancient Greeks, the founders of skepticism and its variants, the author shows how skepticism has had an influence throughout history, especially in philosophy and theology. Thiselton interacts with Erasmus, Luther, Descartes, and Kierkegaard to support his arguments. This chapter closes with an interesting discussion of social and moral contributions and the effect of biblical wisdom when it comes to fending off unwarranted skepticism.

In chapter three, Doubt and Belief,