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Issues in New Testament Studies Part 1



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In this and the next issue, we wade into the crowded waters of New Testament Studies. In Part 1, we present the work of a veteran scholar, Dr. Donald Hagner, the George Eldon Ladd Professor Emeritus of New Testament at the School of Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. We also present the work of two newer scholars, Adrian Rosen, Ph.D (cand.) and Marlene Yap, MTh (cand.), who both teach here at APTS.

All articles were originally given as lectures at the 24th annual William W. Menzies Lectureship Series January 18-22, 2016, on the APTS campus in Baguio City, Philippines and have been edited for publication.

The five articles by Hagner deal with continuity and discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments. Following the opening article that lays the groundwork for all of the lectures, he divides his material into four parts (1) Newness and Discontinuity in the Gospels, (2) Newness in the Pauline Corpus, (3) Pauline Corpus and Hebrews and (4) Catholic Epistles and the Apocalypse. As Hagner notes, the discussion on continuity and discontinuity of the two Testaments is not new. Throughout history, the pendulum “has swung back and forth to extremes in the history of NT scholarship, depending on the climate of the times.” He contends that much of the past discussion focuses on discontinuity, while more recently the pendulum has swung completely toward continuity. Here, with plenty of OT and NT references to both sides, he reflects a refreshing balance.

Adrian Rosen’s article takes a close look at the ascension and exaltation of Jesus in Lukan theology. His stated purpose is “to clarify the theological significance of the event most often designated as the ascension” of Christ, as detailed by Luke in Luke 24:51 and Acts 1:2, 9-11 and 22. Rosen, however, prefers the term assumption to ascension to describe the translation of Jesus into heaven as he feels it more comprehensively describes what happened. He points out that Luke

repeatedly alluded to the ascension of Elijah as a type of the assumption of Christ, suggesting that Luke was importing the same theological ramifications. One is compelled to agree with him that “the assumption provided a graphic and symbolic display of Jesus’ exaltation to God’s right hand.”

Marlene Yap’s article is a welcome contribution to a growing emphasis on shame/honor issues in biblical studies. Articles like this provide a necessary reflection on an issue that uncovers a cultural blind spot among most western scholars, whose writings tend to reflect the West’s guilt/innocence cultural orientation. In doing so, she tangentially reveals both the need and value of theological dialogue between the West and the Majority World, something that has always been a core value of the *AJPS*.

Yap contends that because the cultures of the NT were based on shame and honor, they should be understood and interpreted within that cultural framework. Here, she focuses on three of Jesus’ parables, The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), The Dishonest Manager (Luke 16:1-8) and The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). For Yap, the focus of the story of the Prodigal Son is really on the counter cultural attitudes of the father more than that of either of his sons. In the Dishonest Manager, she points out that the theme of the owner’s magnanimity is much stronger than that of the steward’s dishonesty. In doing so, she gives the clearest interpretation of this parable I have ever read. In the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, the theme of honor and shame is reflected in the sociological status of Abraham, the rich man and Lazarus. The unrepentant rich man talks to Abraham, since he is the father of all Jews, rather than lowering himself to speak to Lazarus. In doing so, he insults Abraham as well, since Lazarus is Abraham’s guest of honor in Paradise. In tying these articles together, Yap contends that the overall themes that unite these parables are God’s justice, grace and love. Her interpretation of these stories through the honor/shame cultural lens supports her conclusion well.

Allow me to say a word about the Asian/Western authorship makeup of this edition. Through the years, the *AJPS* has pursued a good balance between publishing the work of Asians and Westerners. For the previous two editions, all authors have been Asian. There are two reasons why this edition reflects a western dominance. One, as mentioned, the Hagner articles were presented as a unit at our

Lectureship, and the editorial team felt that it would be better to present them here in the same manner rather than dividing them up over two editions, which was our original intent. Second, we were intending to publish an article by another Asian author and put the Rosen article in the next edition, but had to switch them due to editing issues. For those who would prefer to see more Asian authors, thank you for understanding.

As always, you are welcome to contact me through www.aps.edu. I'd be delighted to hear from you.

Thanks for reading,

Dave Johnson, D.Miss
Managing Editor