

Regression in Galatians is a great read and well recommended to all studying Paul.

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N. T. WRIGHT, *Galatians* (Commentaries for Christian Formation; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2021). Pp. xix + 419. Hardback. US\$39.99.

This recent offering on Galatians in the Commentaries for Christian Formation (CCF) series from N.T. Wright presents a simple yet well-developed exposition on this important letter of Paul. Although it is far more expansive than his previous commentary in the *Paul for Everyone* series and goes into more detail and background than that earlier offering, it is still written in the clear and eloquent narrational style expected of Tom Wright and evident in his other popular works for general readership.

The CCF series aims at focusing on Christian formation as the key outcome of the commentaries in the series and is a fresh attempt to bring together the skills of good exegesis, preaching, teaching and application to help a reader in their theological and faith formation. For Wright, this commentary on Galatians provides this opportunity. As he notes in the preface, his previous works include more detailed scholarly engagement with textual issues and scholarly debates. This particular commentary offers the opportunity to distil that previous research into something applicable for readers in today's world.

Wright first considers how Galatians helps with Christian formation. According to Wright, “the Bible tells the story of God, the world, Israel, and above all, Jesus. It tells it in such a way, from many angles and in many genres, as if say to its readers: *this is your story. This is your home. Learn what it means to live here*” (3, emphasis original). Galatians is no exception. Even though many today do not face the precise challenges of the early church in Galatia, merely reading and applying the book by taking general lessons or principles can lead to “creating an abstract de-historicised world” (4). In doing so some of the key narrative themes and concepts in the letter miss the true importance of these themes within Paul's argument. Recent research into Paul's wider world and worldview—including his Jewish context—have helped alleviate such abstractions and challenge anachronistic and atomised readings of the text. Consequently, spending time working *through* the text as a coherent whole, as Wright does here, is an important facet of Wright's exposition of the text.

To that end, throughout *Galatians*, Wright discusses each verse in what has become his trademark narrative style. He also ensures that his exposition connects to the overall aim of the commentary. He clearly explains key themes and textual issues, but he does so without spending inordinate amounts of space

engaging with the various scholarly debates. Although some may consider this a weakness of the commentary, he does provide sufficient footnotes to direct readers to these broader discussions and debates, even though the footnotes are few and brief. Almost half of the introduction discusses the ways in which Galatians has been read and understood throughout Church history—including a focus on recent interpretations since the Reformation. Much of this discussion summarises Wright's previous works that cover the key names and theological positions within recent Pauline scholarship. The rest of the introduction is dedicated to identifying the situation in the Galatian church and Paul's response to this. This includes outlining some of the key themes and why Paul argues the way he does throughout the letter. Again, many may find this a lacking detail for an introduction. However, the clarity and, at times, simplicity with which Wright discusses these things provides an informative and refreshing read. Also, many of the elements often found in commentary introductions that some may find lacking, such as who Paul's opponents are, or consideration of the broader socio-political and cultural contexts, are left to the appropriate sections within the letter itself.

The structure of the commentary is consistent. Each section offers a translation of the text, a brief introduction to the key themes in the section, discussion on the flow of Paul's argument in the text, followed by a verse-by-verse exposition where Paul's argument, any textual concerns and key themes are discussed in further detail. When Wright explains a Greek term, he uses the transliterated form, and his explanations are written for general readership. Those wanting to delve any deeper are directed to the scholarship in the footnotes. The exposition of the text is clear and consistently directs readers to consider how it informs and helps with Christian formation. The commentary includes a good bibliography, a very good index of subjects, an index of authors, and an index of Scripture and other sources.

Overall, I found this an enjoyable read as far as commentaries go. Those who, like me, have engaged with and been influenced by Wright's work and thought will find this offering consistent with his writing style and thinking. Those who are looking for a more scholarly and exegetical work from Wright will be disappointed. Those who are at odds with Wright's thought and theology will not be surprised; there is nothing particularly fresh with what Wright has to say about Galatians. As Wright himself notes at the start of the book, we all come to any written work with our own lenses. If, however, we understand the purpose of a book such as this, we will not be disappointed. Consequently, if we read *Galatians* in light of its purpose, reading it will go a long way towards fulfilling the aim of the series in helping with Christian formation.

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