

# BOOK REVIEWS

**Moisés Silva (ed.), *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 2nd ed., 5 vols., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014, 3635 pp., ISBN 978-0-310-27616-6**

Moisés Silva, formerly a NT professor at Westmont College, Westminster Seminary and Gordon-Conwell Seminary offers the Bible reader a thorough revision of the celebrated *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, edited by Colin Brown in 1978. Advances in lexicography made possible in recent times by the modern digital tools made necessary this updating and revisioning of Brown's work. As the title announces, this dictionary treats not just matters of biblical theology but also issues of exegesis, with plenty of extended focus on key texts for the words being studied.

Unlike Brown's dictionary, here the entries are listed in alphabetical order according to the Greek word families. This structure eliminates the a problem existing in Brown, where largely unrelated Greek words are dealt with together simply because sometimes they are translated by the same English word. But for those interested in the information that Brown's structure provided there's a sixty-page list, repeated at the beginning of each volume, with English concepts alphabetically arranged, completed with their semantic domains in Greek. An entire final volume of indexes allows one to look up all references to Scripture and other ancient literature and all Greek and Hebrew words discussed.

Under each word group Brown has short sections for for classical Greek and Septuagintal uses. Silva instead simply refers to Greek literature and Jewish literature thus being able to range more widely and to expand those sections, but never to the length we find in Kittel. In most articles the NT sections are the longest, as in Brown, with particular emphases on some NT authors and books, along with a brief exegesis of the most important texts relevant for the word group under study. Prepositions are

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no longer treated in a separate appendix, as in Brown, but are incorporated into the alphabetical entries at the appropriate places. Many new words have been added, bringing the numbers of the entries to about 800, with over 3000 Greek words analysed.

Examples of the treatment of specific topics can just be offered selectively, given the wealth of information contained in the dictionary's five volumes. Silva rightly notes that no strong difference should be postulated between *agapaō* and *phileō* unless context dictates it (and probably John 21,15-17 does not). *Aiōnios* does usually mean "everlasting" in the NT, especially with heaven and hell, rather than "to the end of the age" as sometimes in the Old. *Hamartia* is the word for sin with the greatest semantic range, while *parabasis* without exception refers to a conscious transgression or trespass. *Egeirō* more consistently refers to resurrection than *anistēmi*, even though both mean to raise up. The peculiarity of Jesus' teaching of the *basileia* was not in the character of this kingdom, nor even in its eschatological perspective but in its inseparable link to his person. *Boulomai* and *boulē*, when referring to God's will or counsel, always denote "irrefragable determination" (I, 528). *Ginōskō* and *oida*, the two main words for "know," may refer to experiential vs. cognitive knowledge, respectively, but a large percentage of the time this is clear due to other contextual and syntactical features that demonstrate it, not any meaning inherent in the words themselves.

Speaking in tongues (*glōssa*) does not imply a certain linguistic structure but is an unintelligible utterance not attributable to the "excitability of human piety" (I, 590) but to the work of the Spirit for God's glory and worship. The *egō* of Romans 7 may refer to every person, Christian and non-Christian alike. The image (*eikōn*) of God "in" humanity may be an inaccurate label, since we reflect his unique mold throughout every part of our beings. Language about election (*eklektos*, *eklegomai*) suggests that the people of God exist as a new creation exclusively by His grace.

Genuine *elpis* (hope) "involves the abandonment of all calculations of the future" and "the submission of our wishes to the demands of the battle for life to which we have been appointed" (II, 188). The apparent contradiction between Paul and James on works (*erga*) is eliminated by indicating that Paul is fighting against the opinion that they can lead to righteousness, while James combats a dead, fruitless orthodoxy. *Hēsychios* often does not mean absolute silence but a gentle, teachable behaviour; so

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probably in 1 Tim. 2, 11-12, especially given its use that way in 2, 2.

Key texts apply *theos* (God) to Jesus, showing the NT's clear belief in his deity. The meaning of *thlipsis* (tribulation, distress) which believers have to suffer from the world can be understood only in solidarity with Christ's sufferings. "The decisively new and constitutive factor for any Christian conception of time is the conviction that, with the coming of Jesus, a unique *kairos* has dawned, one by which all other time is qualified" (II, 590). *Kaleō* (to call) should not be interpreted uniformly from one writer or speaker to the next. For Paul it may often be effectual; for Jesus, in the parables, it means to invite, and it can be refused. The *apantēsis* (meeting) of 1 Thess. 4, 17 is probably that of a welcoming party that will usher Christ back to earth in triumph.

The treatment of *logos* (word) spans over 43 pages, being by far the longest in the list. The major distinctive about this word's use in the NT is that it refers to a divine being who became fully incarnate. A *mesitēs* (mediator) was normally "a neutral third party seeking to negotiate an agreement" (III, 288) between two other conflicting parties. Jesus' lack of neutrality may explain why this term is comparatively rarely used of him in Scripture. Jesus sees the *nomos* (Law) as God's revealed will. Though He challenges many common interpretations of it, and he inaugurates an era in which many of its injunctions, being fulfilled, are no longer applied identically. Jesus came in the likeness (*homoioōma*) of sinful flesh not because he was less than fully human but because he was not sinful nor did he ever sin.

Greek Church Fathers uniformly understood the *pistis tou Christou* as an objective genitive (faith in Christ) rather than a subjective one (the faithfulness of Christ) but current scholarship seem to incline towards the latter. We should follow the Fathers here. By signs (*sēmeia*) we can understand miracles or pointers to faith, which never compel it. "However, what finally and radically distinguishes Jesus' miracles (...) is their eschatological reference" (IV, 288).

*Sōma* (body), *pneuma* (spirit), and *psychē* (soul) do not denote three separate parts of the human person, but there is a partial dualism of the material and immaterial that must be acknowledged. The *pneumatikos* (spiritual person) in 1 Cor. 2 is any true Christian; only in ch. 3 does Paul introduce a distinction among believers (with the *sarkikos* or fleshly person). *Physis* (nature) usually refers to God's created order and cannot be

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used to relativize Paul's teaching on homosexuality. *Psychros* (cold) in Rev. 3, 18 is just as positive as warm is, given the two forms of water supply at Laodicea; only lukewarm is negative. Regarding the meaning of *huios* (son) "we should finally stress that 'Son of Man' and 'Son of God' do not form a pair of contrasting titles, denoting Jesus' humanity and deity respectively" (IV, 546).

In such a sizeable work there will be inevitable flaws. That Gehenna was a perpetually burning garbage dump in Jesus' day is an idea that cannot be satisfactory substantiated. Nor can we prove that men and women were separated in the synagogues in the Second Temple Judaism. It is also unlikely that, in the first century, almost all Jewish women wore a veil in public places. Differentiation between Peter and his confession as the rock (*petra*) on which Jesus would build his church needs no more stress since it is seldom adopted.

Occasionally, at the end of an entry, later developments of an area named after the term under study are discussed. E.g., the article on *hermeneuō* ends with a short presentation of the modern discipline of hermeneutics. Likewise, a final paragraph under *deka* (ten), describes the transition from voluntary giving to legislated tithing under Charlemagne in the eighth century. Unfortunately we do not find such reflections at the end of theologically more important articles like *eucharisteō* or *leitourgia*.

Nevertheless, the overall effect of this thorough and painstaking updating is hugely positive. Professor Silva has done a great work, undoubtedly appreciated by all Bible students.

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