

Ziegler's penchant for apocalyptic is driven by a concern for the "future of theology," but in the Scriptures apocalyptic has to do with the future of the world, even about "things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev 1:1). The preeminent thing is the final advent of Christ, and yet there is scarcely any mention of this aspect of Christology in *Militant Grace*. This is an astonishing omission when you consider that it was faith in the imminent return of Christ that—more than anything—galvanised Paul and the other apostles.

Criticisms aside, *Militant Grace* is an impressive work, and it will surely stimulate discussion on a biblical theme that ought to have a strong bearing on dogmatic theology as well as the church's life and mission.

David Bentley Hart, *The New Testament: A Translation*. Cornwall, UK: Yale University Press, 2017. (577 pp.) [ISBN: 9780300186093]

**Robert Jason Pickard
Dunedin, New Zealand**

David Bentley Hart, a scholar in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, and currently a fellow at the Notre Dame Institute for Advanced Studies, has produced a remarkable translation of the New Testament. Hart's project is intriguing for several reasons. First, it is rare to find a translation of the entire New Testament by a single author. This approach gives the work coherence and a consistency of method and thought—something hard for translations done by committees to achieve at the same level. Second, unlike most modern Bible translations, Hart seeks to provide "an almost pitilessly literal translation" (p. xvii). Hart proceeds in this way, because he believes it will help the church recapture the radical world of New Testament times. Today's church, and the average Christian believer, are out of touch with this radically different way of life that Jesus calls his followers to in the Scriptures. Hart wants to recover this profound reality that the Church lives, already, in the age to come (pp. xvii, xxiv). Yet, behind this laudable goal, lies many of Hart's own presuppositions.

Given that several critical reviews dealing with Hart's work on methodological and literary grounds already exist, in this review I would like to suggest that Hart's own theological presuppositions colour his work in more profound ways than he admits. This approach is warranted because Hart claims that popular Bible translations such as the *New International Version* and the *English Standard Version* are distorted by the translators' "doctrinal or theological or moral ideologies" (p. xv). However, at key points, Hart's translation doesn't escape the doctrinal and ideological driven tendencies Hart finds in today's more popular Bible translations. As much as I admire Hart's work, there seem to be two major presuppositions dominating the work as well. These are his own Eastern tradition, and his understanding of universal salvation.

First, Hart cannot escape working from within his own theological tradition. Of course, Hart knows this (p. xvi), but yet still presents himself as the one who will produce a translation that is free from the translator's own theological commitment. Hart claims that he will avoid ideological driven conclusions due to his ruthless literal approach to translation. Nevertheless, Hart's own theological starting point influences

much of his work. The most obvious place this is seen in is in Hart's footnote at Romans 5:12. This is indeed an important verse, so much so, that Hart believes the Vulgate's corrupt translation led the Western church astray (p. xv). In fact, in his endorsement of this work, John Milbank writes, "Hart has shown, after five hundred years, that the core of Reformation theology is unbiblical and that certain currents of Latin theology are dubious or inadequate" (see the back cover of the book).

The doctrinal issue in question is how we are to understand the referent of the dative singular pronoun, *quod*. Does it refer back to *death* or to *Adam*? If it refers back to *death*, then the meaning of the text would be "that the consequence of death spreading to all human beings is that all became sinners" (p. 296). Hart explains that the Latin Vulgate misses Paul's intended meaning by using the masculine pronoun *quo* and the feminine noun *mors* (p. 296) and thus shifting the referent from death to Adam. This, Hart believes, disproves the Western notion of original sin. Hart argues that death spreading to all because they sin is the more likely way to read the Greek text at this point (the common Western reading that all have sinned in Adam is wrong). In addition, Hart argues that if the Western tradition is right, then Romans 5:14 is unintelligible (p. 297).

Contra the Western conception of original sin, Hart believes that sin is a disease "contagion" (p. 296) and claims that "the Eastern tradition was spared" from the West's mistake "by its knowledge of Greek" (p. 296). Rhetorically, this claim packs a lot of punch, but the issue is not as simple as knowing Greek or not. Lying behind this claim are two different theological approaches to the doctrine of sin. At this point, Hart's presuppositions are on full display, as are mine, because I write as a committed Reformed Protestant. Exegesis is critically important, yet exegesis of Romans 5 occurs within a canonical and theological context that even a *literal* translation cannot escape. Behind any interpretation of such weighty verses is one's understanding of Adam and Eve and their relationship to the rest of humanity. What does God mean when he promises death, not disease, to Adam and Eve if they eat the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden? Further, Roman 5:14, is clearly intelligible for the Western Christian if Adam and Eve are the first parents of us all. The question of original sin cannot be reduced to a single verse of Scripture, and certainly not the concluding phrase of one difficult verse (Romans 5:12). Rather, one's understanding of sin is more a reflection on their own theological commitments, and, therefore, the Scriptures as a whole. Yes, exegesis drives, or at least should drive, one's theological conclusions, yet no one approaches the text free from pre-commitments and influences. Therefore, even Hart's "pitilessly literal" rendering of Romans 5:12 does not answer all the questions involved when thinking through the problem of sin and how it enters the world. Therefore, in spite of both Hart's and Milbank's claims, the Reformation has not been overthrown—in fact the claim about "knowing Greek" is quite puzzling given that it was precisely the return to the Greek text that led many of the Reformed Protestants to develop their understanding of Adam, original sin, and covenant theology. Furthermore, the insights on sin spreading throughout the world that Hart writes of in this footnote can easily be affirmed by Western Christians alongside their traditional understanding of original sin.

Hart's second presupposition follows on from the first. The translation ends with a "Concluding Scientific Postscript" in which Hart reveals that a major goal of his translation is to rightly understand the concept of punishment and the afterlife. This leads Hart to a long discussion detailing his understanding of αἰώνιος as an indefinite period of time rather than necessarily *eternal*. From here, Hart draws the conclusion that the New Testament is much more universalistic in its claims of each human's destiny than many in the West realize (p. 537). Hart's theological understanding that hell is not eternal but a place for all sin to be purged certainly is a factor in the way he translates words related to the duration of the afterlife (he also devotes a section to the concept of Gehenna and Hades). I say the first presupposition leads into the second because Hart tells us that his thinking is led, at least in part, "by a number of Christian theologians and exegetes (especially such explicit universalists as the great Alexandrian Clement and Origen, the "pillar of orthodoxy" Gregory of Nysaa...as well as other rhetorically reserved universalists, such as Gregory of Nazianzus" (p. 539). Such an admission makes one wonder if exegesis of the Greek text, or the reading of beloved Greek fathers drives such a long defence of Hart's understanding of hell and the afterlife. (And it should be noted that his reception and use of these church fathers is debatable.) In this postscript, Hart clearly favours ancient Eastern theologians and has no time for Augustinian influences, whether from the man himself or his reformed followers such as John Calvin (pp. 548, 551, 554).

In many ways Hart's translation is a remarkable achievement. Scholars and pastors working in the original languages will benefit from consulting Hart's work even when they disagree. The actual translation of the Greek text is helpful at many points. If Hart's goal is to make sure the Scriptures never become too common for those who read them regularly, then he has accomplished his goal. In this review, I have interacted mainly with Hart's introductory and concluding essays, in order to uncover Hart's own presuppositions that filter through the whole work in subtle ways. In my estimation, Hart has not overturned the Reformation with a footnote (in fact his postscript reveals some serious misunderstandings about Protestantism), but has given the serious Christian a wonderful resource. This includes Western, or even Protestants like myself, yet the wise reader will know that no Bible translation is free of the theological commitments of the translator.

Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation and Mission*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2015. (351 pp.) [ISBN: 9780802868848]

Kenneth M. Keyte
Auckland New Zealand

Many New Zealand pastors are concerned about why our churches are so ineffective at evangelism. Is it because we are not proclaiming the gospel? Or is it because we are not practicing the gospel by helping people in need? Gorman would answer that effective evangelism is not just about what Christians say or do but is more importantly about what we become. He answers the question with a rigorous explanation of how Paul addresses particular contexts in which the churches he wrote to could become the gospel they