If grammar is the book’s strength, it comes at the expense of in-depth syntactical explanations of various categories, which are too few, brief, and understated. For the student in an undergraduate theology program, Bible college, or seminary who takes Greek in two semesters, or even over a couple of years, such brevity will leave holes in his or her ability to evaluate the various usages of nouns and verbs, on whose very interpretation an accurate theology often hinges. Well-written volumes covering advanced syntax and grammar are readily available, and must be used to supplement this work.

But can average people pick up this book and learn to read the NT on their own? If an individual is a strong self-starter, motivated, and takes time to read the book closely, the content will cover the basics. The benefits of the accompanying CD are to be most realized in this scenario: the student reading the chapter, doing the exercises, self-correcting with the provided key, and then searching previous chapters for why the answer was wrong. The diligent student will find that in just a few lessons, basic Greek sentences very similar to NT Greek will be readable.

So while Hewett attempts to merge both grammar and syntax of NT Greek into one volume, he has only succeeded in adding slightly more syntax to his book than other popular grammarians, while still offering only basic coverage of the essential grammatical systems, a combination that may not be attractive to most teachers of Greek. It may, still, catch the eye of those wishing to learn on their own.

Berrien Springs, Michigan

Brant Berglin


Christ and Caesar addresses the issues of how Paul, and Luke who told Paul’s story, understood the relationship of the gospel to Roman imperial power. Kim opens the book by revealing that he began his research on this topic anticipating the validity of the counter-imperial interpretation of Paul, and its value for NT interpretation. By the end of the study, however, Kim concludes that Paul and Luke are agreed in both “their dialectical attitude to the Roman Empire . . . and in their avoidance of expounding the political implications of the gospel and formulating it in an anti-imperial way.” Instead, he states, they stress personal change “over against institutional change” and “the imminent parousia of the Lord Jesus Christ for the consummation of salvation” (199). Kim comes to this conclusion after thoughtful consideration of the Pauline passages most often used to support the anti-imperial hypothesis (1 Thessalonians, Philippians, Romans, and 1 Corinthians), and of Luke’s presentation of Jesus’ redemption and of the apostles’ work. Particular attention is given in the book to identifying problematic methodology and other challenges with the anti-imperial interpretation.

Part 1 addresses the Pauline passages, beginning in chapters 1 and 2 by considering the readings of a number of leading theorists on this topic. Kim grants the use, in these passages, of terms used to extol Christ and his
kingdom, which parallel those used of Roman imperial rule, as well as the presence of the imperial cult in a number of these cities. He also grants that Paul did at times present the gospel of Jesus in antithesis to the gospel-good news of Caesar’s Pax Romana, while seeking to shape the people of God as an alternative society to the ways of the Roman world. He argues, however, that in the context of each book as a whole, Roman imperial rule is just one example of a much broader problem. He argues further that Paul neither opposed Roman rule, advocated resistance to Rome, nor gave any clear or extended criticism of the Roman government.

Chapter 3 and 4 address the methodological problems and interpretative difficulties common in the defense of the anti-imperial hypothesis. Kim contends, for example, that it is illogical to argue that the Roman parallels in Paul’s terminology for Christ and his rule would have been clearly understood as attacks on Roman power, while at the same time arguing that attacks on Rome cannot be seen elsewhere in the Pauline writings because safety needs forced him to place his attacks in code. Kim demonstrates instead, that Paul believed that the oppression and injustice of the Roman Empire would be resolved only at the parousia, which was imminent. In places in Part 1, it is not clear whether Kim allows for Christ’s kingdom to be presented as in anyway antithetical to Rome, but this is eventually made clear in the summary and conclusion to the section.

Part 2 of the book deals with Luke and Acts, arguing that one purpose of Luke-Acts was to demonstrate the inaccuracy of any political interpretation of Jesus’ Messiahship, and of Paul’s gospel. Chapters 6-10 demonstrate that while Luke was critically aware of the evils of the Roman Empire and did not flinch from proclaiming Jesus and not Caesar to be the true Lord, he portrays the redemption brought by the Messiah Jesus not as a deliverance from the Roman Empire, but from the kingdom of Satan. Thus Jesus, in his life and death, dealt with many and varied manifestations of evil—including sin, suffering, oppression, and death—not in a political way, by trying to change the socioeconomic systems of his day, but through spiritual deliverance and the formation of a community acting in love and peace. While Luke’s early chapters present Jesus as a kingly figure bringing deliverance from enemies, Luke and Acts go on to demonstrate that, rather than calling for vengeance on the Gentiles, Jesus criticized violent revolution and redefined the people of God to include Gentiles. Further, Acts shows that Jesus, upon his exaltation to the right hand of God, continued this same work through his apostles. Kim ascribes this approach by Luke-Acts not to a single reason but to a variety of factors that he explores in chapter 11.

In his conclusions, Kim switches course abruptly to suggest that Luke’s ascension Christology, as well as several Pauline passages, provide the church with a theological model calling the church, now freer, more numerous, and less eschatologically focused, to extend Christ’s saving work also to the political sphere. Though he briefly gives several justifications for this view, including precedents he sees in the books of Revelation and Hebrews, this final assertion does not necessarily follow from the preceding chapters.
requires more extensive argumentation to be credible. The weakness of this final argument does not, however, detract from the value of Kim has done in analyzing and responding to the hypothesis that Luke and Paul advocated opposition against the Roman Empire. This book will be useful to anyone interested in what the NT has to say about political involvement by Christians and the church.

Andrews University


Many theologies of John have approached the book from a variety of directions. Typically scholars approach the Fourth Gospel in terms of its relation to the OT or other ancient sources. Others approach the book in terms of the Greco-Roman context or of proposed earlier stages in the development of the Gospel. Without disparaging these other approaches, Koester chooses to limit himself to careful attention to the text of John as we have it.

According to Koester, to read the Gospel of John theologically is to ask a series of questions: “Who is the God about whom Jesus speaks? Who does the Gospel say that Jesus is? And how does the Gospel understand life, death, sin, and faith?” Koester finds these issues coming up again and again in the narrative of John’s Gospel, each time disclosing a fresh dimension of these themes. He believes, therefore, that the best approach to a theology of the Gospel of John is to draw on the Gospel as a whole.

Koester, however, does not limit himself to the theological language of the Gospel’s author. Instead, he approaches John’s theology primarily on the basis of classical categories such as God, Christ, humanity, sin, Spirit, and faith. However, he breaks down each of these using categories drawn from the Gospel itself, such as word, light, life, flesh, world, truth, and witness. This unusual intersection of John’s language and classical themes, is, however, extremely successful, in my opinion. The outcome is by far the most fruitful and interesting theology of John I have read.

The book is elegantly written, a model of clarity and organization. I don’t mean to suggest that the book is light reading. It is not. But Koester has thought deeply about recognizable themes in the Gospel and has brought fresh wording and insight to bear on them. In the process, he has a knack for contemporary analogies that clarify inner connections within the Gospel without oversimplifying. To put it in other words, the more you know about the Fourth Gospel, the more you will appreciate this book.