

*Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*). Does it mean that nothing has happened in this area for the last fifteen years and it experiences a decline? The chapter on hermeneutics and exegesis discusses only perspectives of theological interpretation of Scripture and reader-response hermeneutics (African-American, womanist and feminist, Latinx, and postcolonial biblical interpretations). Some essays restrict themselves precisely to publications that appeared after 2004 and, as a result, do not provide the necessary background for the current debates.

For unknown reasons, the reader will also find nothing in the book about recent research of Paul's correspondence with the Corinthians and the Pastoral Epistles, although both areas do not cease to draw scholars' attention. In some chapters, the shortage of critical engagement with the literature reviewed is evident. The authors present researchers' approaches or opinions without evaluating them and depicting their strengths and weaknesses (see, e.g., the description of discourse analysis in chapter 6, the presentation of Daniel Kirk's view on the Synoptic Gospels' Christology in chapter 8, or the entire chapter 19 on the Epistle to the Hebrews). At last, there are some questions about "Select Subject Index." As was said, it can be a helpful tool, but the principles used to create it are unclear. Some important subjects, such as apocalypics, are totally absent while the references to those included in the index are often not full (e.g., narrative criticism/narratological readings).

Notwithstanding these deficiencies, *The State of New Testament: A Survey of Recent Research* is a remarkable and timely work. Therefore, all seriously interested in NT research, especially students and professors, will undoubtedly benefit from reading this book or its parts.

Anatolii Simushov

Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, PHILIPPINES

---

*Humanism and the Death of God: Searching for the Good after Darwin, Marx, and Nietzsche*, by Ronald E. Osborn. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. viii pp. + 232 pp. + 16 pp. bibliography + 8 pp. index. Hardcover. US\$ 80.00.

One Adventist author that does not shy away from tackling difficult questions is Ronald E. Osborn (b. 1975). His *Humanism and the Death of God: Searching for the Good after Darwin, Marx, and Nietzsche* is a carefully researched book, building a strong case against philosophical naturalism's

humanistic construct. The book is introduced by the first (out of five) chapter, "Naturalism and Nihilism," indicating where the conflict lies. Osborn uses a Dostoevskian reading of Darwin, Marx, and Nietzsche in order to support the argument that Western humanism "can only be sustained in the long run" (p. 5) as theistic humanism. If Christianity is eclipsed, humanism cannot survive. After defining the key terms used (naturalism, nihilism, religion, God, good, humanism), Osborn explains that he chose Darwin, Marx, and Nietzsche precisely because their works are foundational to contemporary naturalistic materialism's "disavowal of theological anthropology" (p. 20).

The second chapter, "Dignity after Darwin," highlights that Darwin's theory leads inexorably to a degradation of human dignity, collapsing in moral nihilism. Osborn reveals that any Darwinian ethic suffers from a naturalistic fallacy, which does not allow any statement of value. Osborn agrees with Dostoevsky that, absent God, the Nietzschean will to power is just "the passionate will to death" (p. 58). The author next deconstructs Stephen Jay Gould's "Principle of Non-Overlapping Magisteria" (NOMA), which designates different realms of influence to science and theology. NOMA is self-defeating, as science has embedded ontological and epistemological aspects that trespass its designated realm. Yet, while rejecting Gould's proposal, Osborn does not embrace Intelligent Design. Doing so would imply a "moralistic fallacy" (p. 65), an approach assuming that which it attempts to prove. Rather, argues Osborn, one should consider human experience as a starting point. This begs for recognition, from science's part, of its "apophatic" character that is, or its limitations (p. 68).

The third chapter, "Rights after Marx," explores what Osborn calls "Marx's attempt to ground normative politics in a postmetaphysical logic of self-creation through revolutionary violence" (p. 78). Osborn first explains Marx's admiration of Darwin's naturalism and his attempt to continue the Darwinian proposal in the political and economic spheres. For Marx, truth is historically contingent; hence, the revolution of the proletariat against the bourgeois capitalists can only succeed if it redefines truth according to a "consequentialist ethic" (p. 88). Osborn identifies in Marx a "resentment of indebtedness" (p. 94), thus, in the words of Merold Westphal, plagiarizing biblical prophets after stripping their discourse of its theological content. Osborn then follows closely Marx's influence on Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Sartre, Foucault, Deleuze, Badiou, and Abimael Guzmán in Peru, revealing how their pretend humanism became anti-human. The atheistic humanism is further exposed using Dostoevsky's oeuvre. The chapter ends with the proposal of forgiveness as a social way forward.

The fourth chapter, "Equality after Nietzsche," begins by placing Nietzsche in his historical context, aiming "to suspect suspicion" (p. 133,

emphasis original). Osborn then deconstructs the recent efforts to use Nietzsche's ideas to support humanism (William Connolly, Romand Coles, Lawrence Hatab, Tracy Strong, Daniel Conway, Mark Warren, and Richard Rorty). In Osborn's view, all selectively use Nietzsche to support their own projects. Next, Osborn addresses Nietzschean anti-egalitarianism, revealing that, at its core, it is the same naturalism, ontological assumptions, and resentment as the ones encountered at the previous authors. Osborn ends the chapter with a description of a different type of slave revolt, that of Christianity, which led to an unsurpassed proclamation of human equality.

The fifth chapter, "Beyond Humanism," is dedicated to answering potential objections to Osborn's case for theistic humanism. The first objection comes from political liberalism, of the Rorty, Ignatieff, or Rawls type. Yet, as Osborn shows, whenever moral relativism leads to social experiments, bloodshed follows. The second objection, argues that, in spite of the problems of naturalism, we should quarantine religion to avoid religious wars. Nevertheless, writes Osborn, "to respect and protect difference we must appeal to concepts of universal truth and justice" (p. 192) which cannot be dissociated from a religious worldview. The third objection Osborn analyzes is Samuel Moyn's criticism of the genealogy of human rights. As a counterargument, Osborn points to the perils embedded in Moyn's selective genealogical account. To the fourth objection that the Western Christian humanism does not fit non-Western cultures, Osborn answers that Christianity nowadays is more a non-Western than a Western majority, playing an important role in uplifting the value and dignity of human life. The fifth anticipated objection comes from Ronald Dworkin's proposal of religion without God, which is exposed as onto-theology. Osborn concludes that only "people whose lives in relationship to the Other [can] *rehumanize* humanism" (p. 230, emphasis original), thus moving the discussion not beyond morality but beyond the contemporary attempts to define humanism.

*Humanism and the Death of God: Searching for the Good after Darwin, Marx, and Nietzsche* is an excellent criticism of contemporary attempts to appropriate Darwin, Marx, or Nietzsche to define humanism without God. The book has a wealth of interaction with numerous authors, and, although it is not an easy read, it is well organized, having an overview of each chapter in their respective introductory parts. Osborn does not fully develop his theistic humanism and theological anthropology, using rather a chiaroscuro approach. There are hints that such a model attempts to integrate "a properly humble methodological naturalism and evolutionary theory with a properly open theism" (p. 41), raising the question of whether such a model would withstand Osborn's own critical approach. While disapproving the creationist approaches for their perceived "moralistic

fallacy" (p. 66), Osborn appears to fall under the same criticism when he sets human experience—with its intuitions about good and evil that color one's understanding of reality to the point of functioning as a priori assumptions—at the starting point of theistic humanism. Furthermore, a better development of the forgiveness proposal would have enriched the third chapter, just as the outstanding perspective on the slave revolt morality did for the fourth.

That being said, the book is a must for all those interested in criticism of naturalistic humanism from a theistic perspective. The erudition manifested, the detailed analysis, the respectful tone, the balanced argumentation all commend this book's usefulness. Teachers can use this for graduate courses in philosophy and pastors can find a clear voice supporting their theistic approach to human dignity, rights, and equality. *Humanism and the Death of God: Searching for the Good after Darwin, Marx, and Nietzsche* is a book that should be on the shelf of all concerned about Christianity's contemporary relevance.

Dan-Adrian Petre

Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, PHILIPPINES

---

*Before We Call Them Strangers: What Adventists Ought to Know about Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus*, by Paul Dybdahl. Lincoln, NE: AdventSource, 2017. 166 pp. ISBN 9781629093604. Hardcover. US\$ 14.95.

In *Before We Call Them Strangers: What Adventists Ought to Know about Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus*, Paul Dybdahl explored the basic teachings of Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. He also includes his interviews with devout adherents of these three religions, indicates what he likes about each of these religions, and identifies twelve areas of similarity shared by Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, and Muslim adherents.

Dybdahl begins the first chapter with brief reflections on George Vandeman's book "What I like About..." which proposes a friendly approach to interacting with people of other faiths. A friendly approach entails listening to even those with whom we disagree because we probably have something to like and learn from them. Dybdahl draws on his students' experiences in a World Religions class to demonstrate that studying other religions' teachings might lead to an analysis of one's own beliefs and the discovery of significant Bible verses that have been skimmed over too quickly.