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Bird's "An anomalous Jew: Paul among the Jews, Greeks, and Romans" (Book Review)

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however, a mutual concern throws them together. Can they help each other, and resist their growing feelings for each other, as they partner to find out if there is a link between the extraordinarily large amounts of phenobarbital that are flowing through Lillian's pharmacy and the men on Archer's ship who are struggling with nerves and drowsiness?

Reviewer

Sherill L. Harriger, Warner University

Bird, M. F. (2016). *An anomalous Jew: Paul among the Jews, Greeks, and Romans*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. 310 pp. \$28.00. ISBN 9780802867698

An Anomalous Jew joins a wide selection of books addressing Paul's relationship with Jews, early Christians, Romans, and Gentiles. Bird argues that Paul would have been seen as something of an outsider by all of these groups, and yet would have been assigned to at least one of these categories by the people of his time. There is little new in Bird's argument, but the bibliography and his summary of the academic arguments asserting Paul's marginal status in all of these groups is an achievement in itself. In five chapters of dense academic prose arranged in a dissertation format, Paul's Jewishness in relationship with each of these groups is addressed.

Bird argues that this book is "an attempt to understand Paul's Jewishness as it was expressed in relation to other Jews, to Paul's fellow Jewish Christians, and to Romans and the Roman Empire" (p. vii). Chapter one addresses Paul's new Christian understanding of salvation which is no longer dependent on adherence to Torah, but depends on acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah. Bird argues that this viewpoint would have been seen by Jews as a significant departure from Jewish tradition and that it explains some of the Jewish hostility encountered by Paul. In Chapter two, Bird argues that Paul began his ministry to Jewish Christians through established Jewish institutions, but that differences between Paul and the Jerusalem Church led to Paul's rejection by more traditional Jewish converts. Unlike others who would argue that Paul then went to Gentiles, Bird argues that Paul went to diaspora Jewish communities containing both Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. Paul's new understanding of Jesus and the kingdom do not allow the separate, but "equal," treatment of the non-Jewish converts to Christianity that the Jerusalem Church and most Jewish Christians saw as normative. Bird argues that this results in Paul's move into a predominantly Gentile world for the rest of his ministry. In chapter three Paul's view of the kingdom of God as having entered the world with Jesus is shown as creating difficulty for Paul and the early Christians he influenced. In chapter four the confrontation between Paul and the Jerusalem apostles is further explored. Chapter

five addresses how Romans would have reacted to Paul's Letter to the Romans. Bird argues that the Letter to the Romans may have been a challenge directed at the Roman governmental claim by its emperors of being gods and requiring worship since they had provided for the welfare of the Roman and subjugated people. Paul's teachings about Jesus as the Savior would be seen by the political powers as strongly undermining this idea despite Paul's instructions to be law abiding in the same letter.

In an interesting conundrum Paul, the Roman citizen, who uses his Roman citizenship to avoid being theocratically tried by the Jerusalem Jews is seen by the Romans as disruptive to their system of government where all are required to acknowledge the Roman emperor as god, savior of the people, and the source of all good things. His fellow Christians, whom he has persecuted at one time, are now divided in their view of him. Those of Gentile origins are not comfortable with his Jewishness while those of Jewish origins are not willing to accept Paul's requirement that non-Jewish Christians be not only seen as equal in Christ, but that fellowship with them is required for all Christians – even those who would wish to keep Jewish traditions. Greeks see Paul as not rational enough and too bound by a Jewish past, while non-Greeks are not comfortable with Paul's rationality. Bird argues that it is from this confused situation that Paul would have been seen as anomalous, since he fits everywhere, yet nowhere.

This book does not plow any new ground in the debates about Paul. It does discuss the issues involved in the debate in a thorough manner with numerous references and an excellent bibliography. The writing is too dense for leisurely inspirational reading and not original enough for serious academic study. The book's main value is as a bibliographical resource and an overview regarding some of the Paul debates.

Reviewer

Joseph Baumstarck, Jr., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Orchard, S. (2016). *Another day, Another Dali: A Serena Jones mystery*. Grand Rapids, MI: Revell. 333 pp. \$14.99. ISBN 9780800726713

Sandra Orchard has produced another exciting and entertaining adventure for FBI agent, Serena Jones, who is part of the Art Crime Team. Serena finds herself in the middle of another art theft – no surprise there. But wait, there's more! This time, Serena needs to figure out if the stolen art was the real thing, or a forgery. Certainly, the art that is hanging in the owner's home, is a counterfeit, but perhaps the original had been replaced more than once. By the time Serena begins to examine the theft, a well-known artist and friend of the forgery's owner, Truman Capone, who makes "reproductions" is found dead in his studio.