



*The Voices of the New Testament:  
Invitation to a Biblical  
Roundtable*

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## The New Testament Writers in Dialogue

*Is there a single message of the New Testament? Envisioning a roundtable conversation among the New Testament writers, Derek Tidball reveals how much the authors of the New Testament have in common while permitting them to emphasize their distinct contributions in articulating the message of the good news. The result of eavesdropping on their imagined discussion is a fascinating introduction to the diversity and unity of the New Testament.*

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When George Mallory was asked why he climbed Everest, he famously replied, “Because it’s there.” Writing a book that seeks to convey the message of the New Testament is a bit like climbing Everest. The New Testament is wonderfully rich, complex, and diverse, and also, precisely because it is not a systematic textbook, it can appear untidy. So it’s quite a challenge to bring unity to it without doing it a disservice – but it is a challenge any Bible teacher is likely to welcome, at least after teaching it for some years. Yet that in itself is not an adequate answer. There are some excellent theologies of the New Testament already available, so why another?

The short answer is that none has adopted the approach of this book, which arises from a suggestion made some years ago by the scholar George Caird, as explained more fully in the opening chapter. I imagine the writers of the New Testament sitting around and having a conversation with each other about what they have written. Hopefully this makes it all the more personal and enables us to see more easily where they agree and why they write with different emphases from different perspectives. Imagining a conversation that, as far as we know, never took place is quite a challenge, especially if you want to let the authors speak for themselves without supplementing their words for the sake of the conversation. I am aware how much more could have been said about the topics they discuss, how much more by way of background and interpretation could have been added, and how many other doctrines or themes could have been covered. However, many New Testament theologies are too long to be useful, and they spend time on academic questions that can divert attention from the message itself. It is hoped that both the approach and the level of this book will introduce the one but varied message of the New Testament to those who will never pick up the heavier tomes.

The book developed as a result of teaching a New Testament course at Colombo Theological Seminary in 2014. I dedicate this book to the staff and students of Colombo Theological Seminary, Sri Lanka, and to South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies, Bangalore, India, where it has also been my privilege to teach in recent years. They will know the need to take the revealed gospel of Jesus Christ and faithfully translate it into an Asian context.

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## BOOK EXCERPT

Paul wrote of “the boundless riches of Christ” that he was called to preach (Eph 3:8). In using the word *boundless* he was not saying that the gospel is boundary-less, in a postmodern, anything goes type of way. Rather he meant that the gospel of Jesus Christ is so rich and deep, and can be expressed in so many ways and understood from so many angles, that no one can ever say, “That’s it. I don’t need to look at it further. I’ve understood it all. I’ve reached the summit.” The gospel is “too vast to explore completely and too deep to fathom.” It’s like Everest—except Everest is too high to fathom! Which of us, though, would miss out on at least climbing the foothills, if we could, and beginning to grasp the “unsearchable” gospel? Let the climb—or to mix one’s metaphors, the conversation—begin.

— Adapted from the preface