In this slim volume, N. T. Wright seems to have two objectives. His primary goal seems to be to present the teachings of Paul in a way that reflects the discoveries of modern scholarship and makes them accessible to the educated lay person. A secondary purpose is to respond to the recent book by A. N. Wilson, *Paul: The Mind of the Apostle*. He succeeds at both.

The book begins with an admirable summary of the contributions of A. Schweitzer, R. Bultmann, W. D. Davies, E. Käsemann, and E. P. Sanders. Wright then sets forward his plan for this book: first to deal with history, then theology, then exegesis of specific passages, and finally to look at application of his conclusion to present conditions.

Wright considers Jewish background more important for understanding Paul than information about the Hellenistic world. Because Paul proclaims himself to have been "zealous for the traditions of the fathers," Wright concludes that he was a Shammaite Pharisee, an extreme group that was willing to resort to violence in the service of God. The three main aspects of the Judaism of this period, according to Wright, are monotheism, election, and eschatology. He demonstrates throughout the book that Paul expands these basic categories but never departs from them. Paul's "conversion" is the result of his having seen the risen Jesus. Paul concludes on the basis of this experience that Jesus is indeed the Messiah. His resurrection has inaugurated the new age, when the Gentiles will come to Zion, and Paul understands evangelization of Gentiles to be his specific task.
Wright understands the role of "apostle" to be like that of a herald, specifically the herald of good tidings mentioned in Isaiah 40 and 52. His announcement is the gospel, which Wright defines as the royal proclamation that Jesus is King. Although Paul uses highly exalted language with reference to Jesus, Wright insists that he never departs from Jewish monotheism because his discussions of Jesus Christ follow in the wisdom tradition of Judaism and because he seems to use the Shema to frame his Christology in a way that is virtually trinitarian. Paul considers the gospel good news to the pagans because it replaces their false, polytheistic belief systems with the truth about the one God of the universe. Paul's gospel also has an inherent critique of an exclusive view of Israel's election because it includes Gentiles in God's plan for the salvation of the world.

The theological discussion of the book revolves around the concepts of righteousness and justification. Wright lays out the various options for understanding the phrase, "the righteousness of God," and concludes that it properly refers to God's covenantal loyalty. He then goes on to discuss justification, which he insists is not simply a way for human beings to be saved. Justification is descriptive language, not prescriptive language. Just as the gospel creates the church, according to Wright, justification defines it. The exegetical section of the book discusses passages in Paul's letters that use the terms "righteousness" and "justification" and illustrates how these meanings fit those contexts.

The strongest section of the book is Wright's application of Paul's theological constructs. He discusses Paul's vision of the church as a renewed humanity characterized by love (defined as mutual acceptance without regard to race, class, or gender), holiness (indicated by the willingness to share in the sufferings of Christ), true worship (which is worship of the Creator, not the creation), and mission (which Wright limits to a zeal for proclaiming the gospel). Wright then applies Paul's categories to contemporary culture. He says that the proclamation of Jesus as Lord is a direct refutation of the three major prophets of the twentieth century: Marx, who taught that wealth is the ultimate reality; Freud, who thought that all human behavior is motivated by sex; and Nietzsche, who proclaimed that power is the chief goal of human striving. Wright goes on to say that the proclamation of the gospel results in the creation of a community (the church), not an individualistic piety. People who hear the gospel and respond to it feel a sense of allegiance to Jesus Christ and to his church, not necessarily an emotional experience. The message of the gospel is universal in scope. God is saving the world, not just some small subset within it. Wright concludes with an insight that most lay people reached long ago: that the proclamation of Jesus as Lord is gospel, and all the other doctrines of the church are commentary.

The final chapter of the book is a careful refutation of the major findings of A. N. Wilson's *Paul: The Mind of the Apostle*. It is perfectly understandable that Wright and his editors would want to capitalize on the popularity of Wilson's book, but the chapter seems to be tacked on and is somewhat anticlimactic. It is also probably the reason for
the unfortunate title of the book, which seems to imply that Paul really said that he was the founder of Christianity. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth.

Wright's book is a fine example of British biblical scholarship, which does not divorce the academy and the church as German and American scholars are prone to do. It strikes an American reader as conservative because of its theological and doctrinal interest, but Wright's views are well informed and beautifully expressed. This book should be welcomed by all serious students of Paul.