

Understanding Pauline Studies. An Assessment of Recent Research (Part Two)

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In the first part of this article, I gave a general survey of Pauline studies. In this second part, I wish to go briefly through the Pauline corpus book by book and comment on a number of volumes that I have come across that might be of interest to *Themelios* readers. For each Pauline book, I first cite the commentaries that I think may be of use, noting especially their level of difficulty, perhaps their theological orientation, and something about the required knowledge of Greek. Then I briefly discuss monographs and other studies on these Pauline books.

Romans

Romans is undoubtedly the most widely and intensively studied of the Pauline letters. Four commentaries are worth noting. The first is by Joseph Fitzmeyer,¹ the well-known and justly respected Catholic scholar. His commentary in the Anchor Bible Series does not require knowledge of Greek, although some knowledge does help when it comes to some discussions in the notes. Fitzmeyer emphasizes the theological dimension of the book along traditional lines (for which he is to be commended) and provides excellent bibliographies throughout. His introduction provides a commendable survey of major Pauline issues. He does not deal much with the new perspective on Paul. This is an excellent place to start studying the letter, especially by reading through the summary sections. Douglas Moo has written one volume of a two-volume commentary on Romans.² Moo takes a traditional Reformed standpoint, and so consciously disputes the new perspective on Paul. The commentary is based on the Greek text (a syntactical diagram of the Greek text is promised in volume 2). The commentary is both heavily exegetical and heavily theological. Although at times it tends to dissolve into atomistic, verse-by-verse exegesis, there is much of great value to inform understanding of the text. Peter Stuhlmacher's commentary,³ translated from German, focuses upon the righteousness of God, as seen in his relation to Jews and Gentiles, Israel and the community of faith, thus emphasizing the Jewish background to the letter. Romans 9-11 consequently get their due. Designed for students and not requiring Greek, the commentary treats the material in blocks. There are also a number of excurses on particular theological topics. Reference to secondary literature is kept to a minimum. Lastly, Hendrickson are to be commended for publishing a translation of the classic commentary by Adolf Schlatter, first published in 1935.⁴ Schlatter emphasizes the righteousness of God in this commentary (his influence on Stuhlmacher is to be noted, especially as Stuhlmacher writes an appreciative foreword to this version), which requires some knowledge of Greek to understand it fully.

¹ J.A. Fitzmeyer, *Romans* (AB 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993).

² D. Moo, *Romans 1-8 Vol. 1* (Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary; Chicago: Moody Press, 1991). This series is now published as The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the NT by Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI.

³ P. Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, trans. S. Hafemann (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994).

⁴ A. Schlatter, *Romans: The Righteousness of God*, trans. S. S. Schatzmann (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), the original German having been published in 1935.

There are three introductory works on Romans to be noted. The first is a revised and greatly expanded version of *The Romans Debate*,⁵ first published in 1977. This has become a standard work for the study of Romans, gathering together representative essays on introductory questions. The new edition doubles the content of the first edition, bringing the discussion up to date and including, among others, essays on the new perspective on Paul. A range of scholarly opinion is represented, and this is simply compulsory reading for those starting to study Romans. Robert Morgan has produced a guide to Romans,⁶ which is more than simply a brief introduction. Included are what amounts to a small commentary (the largest chapter in the book), an introduction to the letter's purpose, a miniature Pauline theology, and a history of the book's reception. There is also a small, annotated bibliography. The book's clear purpose is to bring study of Romans up to date in the major areas of recent discussion.

Among the monographs the following merit mention.⁷ Walter Wilson has written *Love without Pretense*,⁸ which examines Romans 12:9-21 in the light of

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Hellenistic-Jewish Wisdom literature. Included is a lengthy and useful discussion of maxims and gnomic statements in ancient literature, with useful definitions and examples. He is less convincing, and perhaps too prone to accept others' conclusions, when dealing with Romans. Don Garlington's *The Obedience of Faith*⁹ is unfortunately a study of the concepts of obedience versus disobedience in a variety of Jewish literature, with only 20 pages devoted to Paul, where he admits that the exact phrase under discussion does not appear before Paul. One must ask whether so much emphasis on background studies is really necessary. Mark Seifrid's *Justification by Faith*¹⁰ is an attempt to redeem this concept in Paul, especially Romans, in the light of recent discussion. He argues for its forensic nature and corrects the new perspective on Paul. He cites the Qumran document IQS and *Psalms of Solomon* as appropriate background for these findings, claiming that they show that divine mercy did not necessarily exclude obedience as a prerequisite to salvation and that Paul may well have been accurately depicting his Judaistic adversaries. Seifrid's discussion of Romans 7:14-25 is thorough and maintains the traditional temporal distinctions regarding Paul's present and past experience but not on the basis of the verb tenses alone, a significant improvement over most interpretation. James Walters argues that ethnic issues stand at the heart of Romans,¹¹ and he attempts to clarify the social and religious context of the city in order to understand the

⁵ K.P. Donfried (ed.), *The Romans Debate: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991).

⁶ R. Morgan, *Romans* (NT Guides; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

⁷ See also L.A. Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans: A Comparative Letter Structure Investigation* (JSNTS 55; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991); B.W. Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant: A Comparison of 4 Ezra and Romans 1-11* (JSNTS 57; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991); and M. Thompson, *Clothed with Christ: The Example and Teaching of Jesus in Romans 12.1-15.13* (JSNTS 59; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991).

⁸ W.T. Wilson, *Love without Pretense: Romans 12.9-21 and Hellenistic-Jewish Wisdom Literature* (WUNT 2.46; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1991).

⁹ D.B. Garlington, *'The Obedience of Faith': A Pauline Phrase in Historical to Context* (WUNT 2.38; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1991).

¹⁰ M.A. Seifrid, *Justification by Faith: The Origin and Development of a Central Pauline Theme* (NovTSup 68; Leiden: Brill, 1991).

¹¹ J.C. Walters, *Ethnic Issues in Paul's Letter to the Romans: Changing Self-Definitions in Earliest Roman Christianity* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993).

purpose of Paul's writing. Richard Bell discusses the jealousy motif in Romans 9-11.¹² He argues that the basis of this idea is Paul's use of Deuteronomy 32. The jealousy motif is seen as a preparation for the return of Christ by provoking Israel to emulate the Gentile Christians. This is part of Paul's apocalyptic thinking. Although marred by some dubious linguistics, including the confusion of word and concept, in all this is a very informative study, of an important section. John Moores wrestles with rationality in Paul,¹³ using a model from the semiotic theory of Umberto Eco and modern rhetoric. Rather than defining the enthymematic elements of Paul's thought, as one might expect in an ancient rhetorical analysis, Moores in essence treats the macro-logical structure of the book. He provides a useful service in articulating the logical progression of various competing interpretations of Paul's line of thought, and extends this analysis over Romans 1-8. The discussion is extremely hard going at times, but there are a number of useful insights, although this study may be more about logic than about Paul. Anthony Guerra's *Romans and the Apologetic Tradition*¹⁴ is an able defence of Romans as a piece of protreptic literature, *i.e.* a form of persuasive literature advocating a particular lifestyle. This study is a model of clarity, not getting bogged down in unnecessary secondary literature, and includes a very useful discussion of the entire book of Romans from this standpoint. As a result, one certainly gets the big picture regarding Romans.

The Corinthian letters

The Corinthian letters have also attracted a significant amount of recent writing. There are three commentaries to mention. The first is the first volume of two on 2 Corinthians by Margaret Thrall for the International Critical Commentary Series.¹⁵ This is one of the standard, if not the premier, English-language, Greek-text-based commentary series. It is now in the second generation, and Thrall's work replaces a one-volume commentary by Plummer. Thrall offers a lengthy introduction, in which she outlines especially various views on the unity of the letter. She then comments on the first seven chapters of the book. The value of the commentary is in the mass of information that is accumulated, including lengthy bibliographies and detailed discussions of various views regarding partition of the letter and, consequently, Pauline chronology. She also includes charts of others' opinions. Thrall opts for three letters: 2 Corinthians 1-8, 9, and 10-13. Less convincing, however, is her exegesis at various points. There is a wealth of grammatical discussion that does not enter into her commentary, even though it is a commentary on the

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Greek text, and she seems too willing to consider evidence that is not entirely germane (*e.g.* rhetorical outlines of chs 8 and 9). Although the commentary is a good guide to the major issues of the discussion, readers will want to make sure that they make up their minds for themselves on various exegetical issues. Ben Witherington III tries to wed two different kinds

¹² R.H. Bell, *Provoked to Jealousy: The Origin and Purpose of the Jealousy Motif in Romans 9-11* (WUNT 2.63; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1994).

¹³ J.D. Moores, *Wrestling with Rationality in Paul: Romans 1-8 in a New Perspective* (SNTSMS 82; Cambridge: CUP, 1995).

¹⁴ A.J. Guerra, *Romans and the Apologetic Tradition: The Purpose, Genre and Audience of Paul's Letter* (SNTSMS 81; Cambridge: CUP, 1995).

¹⁵ M.E. Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to 16 the Corinthians* Vol. 1 (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994).

of critical approach in his recent socio-rhetorical commentary.¹⁶ As a result, the commentary is not a detailed exposition, gliding fairly quickly over a number of issues. Partition theories of 2 Corinthians is one example. Witherington essentially assumes the unity of the letter, using rhetoric to prove his point. The introduction contains a useful discussion of what is known regarding the social setting of the Corinthian letters, with an annotated bibliography of pertinent sources. Unfortunately, to my thinking, Witherington apparently accepts the theory that these letters can be analysed as speeches in epistolary form, so he offers a rhetorical outline. Although the idea is an interesting one, I am not sure that the final product merits the effort. (Readers will want to beware of some of the comments on Greek grammar.) Kevin Quast has written an introduction to the Corinthian letters,¹⁷ apparently designed for study groups (there are questions at the end of each chapter). Although the format looks fairly elementary, there is a lot on offer in this volume, especially as a brief overview to the books or as a refresher. Quast offers a brief introduction to Paul and the city, with a chronology, and then briefly comments on the letters section by section. He gives an abundance of brief charts on various topics and issues. He concludes with an informative discussion of the Pauline letter form (finding four parts) and a brief description of Paul's theology. The little extras are what make this book worthwhile. Craig Blomberg has written a commentary in the NIV Application Commentary Series.¹⁸ The exegesis and application are very basic.

Monographs and studies of the Corinthian letters include some very good work.¹⁹ These sometimes rely heavily on inscriptional, papyri and archaeological evidence. Use of these primary texts certainly adds to the studies' relevance, although it does not necessarily guarantee the accuracy of their conclusions. Andrew Clarke has written on leadership in Corinth, on the basis of 1 Corinthians 1-6.²⁰ This short, concise study is bound to incite some disagreement, since he distances his historical-social method of analysis from social-scientific criticism, claiming that he is going to analyse the primary sources apart from an established social theory. His conclusions are probably correct - the Corinthian church was a mixed community, with some in the upper social echelons who were involved in a number of practices that were all too typical of the Roman society of the time, such as benefaction. Verlyn Verbrugge tries to show how Paul changed his strategy in raising the collection from the Corinthian church.²¹ After identifying a commanding letter in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, Verbrugge shows how that did not produce the desired results. He then shows how Paul used the requesting letters in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 (he partitions 2 Corinthians in a way similar to Thrall), letters that were written after 2 Corinthians 10-13. Although Verbrugge presents interesting evidence from the papyri, especially on fundraising in the ancient world, he fails to prove the existence of the commanding 2 letter or his chronology. Peter Gooch studies the

¹⁶ B. Witherington, III, *Chaos and Community in Corinthians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), published as *Conflict and Community in Corinth* by Eerdmans of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

¹⁷ K. Quasi, *Reading the Corinthian Correspondence: An Introduction* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994).

¹⁸ C. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians* (NIV Application Commentary Series; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994).

¹⁹ See also J.A. Crafton, *The Agency of the Apostle: A Dramatistic Analysis of Paul's Responses to Conflict in 2 Corinthians* (JSNTS 51; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991); L.L. Belleville, *Reflections of Glory: Paul's Polemical Use of the Moses-Doxa Tradition in 2 Corinthians 3.1-18* [sic 3.12-18] (JSNTS 52; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991); J.K. Chow, *Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in Corinth* (JSNTS 75; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992); W.J. Webb, *Returning Home: New Covenant and Second Exodus as the Context for 2 Corinthians 6.14-7.1* (JSNTS 85; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993).

²⁰ A.D. Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth: A Socio-Historical and Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 1-6* (AGJU 18; Leiden: Brill, 1993). 21

²¹ V.D. Verbrugge, *Paul's Style of Church Leadership Illustrated by his Instructions to the Corinthians on the Collection* (San Francisco: Mellen 22 Research University Press, 1992).

eating of idol food at Corinth.²² After discussing the archaeological evidence, he outlines Paul's position as one that advocated abandoning laws regarding circumcision and kosher food. Nevertheless, Paul also maintained that there should be no contact with other gods, which led to his position and argument in 1 Corinthians 8-10. Gooch further maintains that the Corinthians apparently ignored Paul's instructions, since food offered to idols was very much a part of the social environment of Corinth. Although some of the distinctions that Gooch makes regarding differences in the contexts of 1 Corinthians 8 and 10, and in Paul's positions, need to be weighed further, he marshals some very interesting evidence from the NT and later church writers. In a collection of essays on *Pauline Theology*, papers presented at the Society of Biblical Literature's annual meetings 1989-91 are gathered together.²³ There is more cohesion to this volume than the one above, with two essays each offering more comprehensive overviews of the theology of 1 and 2 Corinthians (authors of papers include Gordon Fee and Tom Wright).

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Bibliographies for each of the books are included. In *One Loaf, One Cup*,²⁴ five essays presented in 1988 at a conference on the Eucharist are printed together. Although the authors represent various traditions and are analysing different dimensions of the principal texts, there is a significant amount of overlap and coherence, especially as regards seeing 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 as reflecting normative Christian practice. Brian Rosner is a man determined to make his point in *Paul, Scripture and Ethics*.²⁵ His point is not an easy one to make, try as he may. He claims that there has been negligence in finding a scriptural basis for Paul's ethics, and examines 1 Corinthians 5-7 with the intention of finding the scriptural background to these Pauline ethical admonitions. Find them he does, especially in Deuteronomy, although they are mediated through various later Jewish interpretations of the biblical text. Although there is some good discussion of the basis of Pauline ethics and how to make discerning use of the OT, there is some special pleading and overlooking of other significant factors. By contrast, J. Albert Harrill examines manumission of slaves in early Christianity in the context of Roman social and economic, rather than legal, structures.²⁶ He examines two key passages, 1 Corinthians 7:21 and Ignatius, *Ad Polycarp* 4:3. He finds that both of them endorse the idea that, if offered the opportunity of freedom, the slave should take it. Harrill's argument is based upon detailed exegesis, as well as extra-biblical evidence. His conclusions are contrary to those of many other recent studies of slavery.²⁷ Although his case is not airtight, since the Greek evidence is slim, he certainly presents an argument worth considering, on a topic of significant practical application regarding early Christianity and contemporary Christian ethics.²⁸

²² P.D. Gooch, *Dangerous Food: 1 Corinthians 8-10 in its Context* (Studies in Christianity and Judaism 5; Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1993).

²³ D.M. Hay (ed.), *Pauline Theology*. II. 1 and 2 Corinthians (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993).

²⁴ B. F. Meyer (ed.), *One Loaf, One Cup: Ecumenical Studies of 1 Cor II and Other Eucharistic Texts, the Cambridge Conference on the Eucharist August 1988* (New Gospel Studies 6; Macon, GA: Mercer/Leuven: Peeters, 1993).

²⁵ B.S. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture and Ethics: A Study of 1 Corinthians 5-7* (AGJU 22; Leiden: Brill, 1994).

²⁶ J.A. Harrill, *The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity* (HUT 32; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1995).

²⁷ For example, S.S. Bartcby, *First-Century Slavery and 1 Corinthians 7:21* (SBLDS 11; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1973)

²⁸ See also D.A. Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry: An Exposition of Passages from 1 Corinthians* (Leicester: IVP/Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993). 29.

Galatians

The rest of the Pauline letters have not been nearly so well served in the last few years as Romans and Corinthians. Galatians, for example, has had three commentaries published on it, that I note here. The first two provide a suitable contrast to each other. Dieter Lührmann's commentary, first published in German in 1978 and revised in 1988,²⁹ is brief but highly readable and very useful as an introduction to the letter. He adopts a Lutheran approach that is consistent with traditional interpretation of the book, with distinctions drawn in Paul's thinking between faith and law. Lührmann offers an awful lot of good explanation of the various pericopes, recognizing the limitations of what we can reconstruct from the letter concerning, for example, the Jerusalem meeting, but offering a sympathetic treatment of Paul and his mission. In contrast is James Dunn's commentary on Galatians.³⁰ As might be expected from what has been said above, this volume offers an interpretation of Paul's letter from Dunn's new perspective on Paul. Hence the emphasis is not upon the kind of contrast between faith and law that Lührmann emphasizes but on the place of defining rituals, with Paul abrogating such things as circumcision, food laws and Sabbath observance as necessary for those of the faith community. Dunn's commentary too is very readable, and the introduction is informative. Neither commentary requires knowledge of Greek, although there is some reference to the Greek in Dunn's. Also to be noted is Walter Hansen's commentary on Galatians.³¹ Hansen finds a *via media* in many respects, appreciating the new perspective on Paul and incorporating Betz's rhetorical analysis with changes, while also adopting traditional and conservative conclusions regarding chronology in relation to Acts, destination and the like. Since this commentary is in a series designed for pastors, it reads well and can offer insights on the passages, although it is not detailed in exegesis. There is virtually no reference to Greek.

Two other books also require mention. The first is also by Dunn, and is a small theology of the book of Galatians.³² He relies upon the exegesis of his commentary mentioned above, but develops the theological issues here. He organizes the theological discussion in a very useful way, selecting issues of

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agreement or disagreement between Paul and those who are his opponents at Galatia. The result is an illustration of the shared beliefs and experiences of Paul and those of the church, something often overlooked because of the sometimes polemical nature of the letter, as well as its presentation of the matters of dispute. The views held in the commentary seem to be exemplified here, including the new perspective on Paul. Nevertheless, even if one does not accept this perspective, the book has much to offer. Hendrikus Boers offers an innovative study of Galatians and Romans³³ (which could have been discussed above under Romans).³⁴

²⁹ D. Lührmann, *Galatians*, trans. O.C. Dean, Jr (Continental Commentary; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992).

³⁰ J.D.G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Black's; London: A. & C. Black/Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993).

³¹ G.W. Hansen, *Galatians* (IVP NT Commentary; Leicester: IVP, 1994). See also *his Abraham in Galatians: Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts* (JSNTS 29; 32 Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989).

³² J.D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (NT Theology; 33 Cambridge: CUP, 1993).

³³ H. Boers, *The Justification of the Gentiles: Paul's Letters to the Galatians and Romans* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994).

Using what he calls textlinguistics and semiotics, and inspired by some earlier interpreters, Boers offers a macro-structural analysis of Galatians and Romans (*i.e.* the structure of each book in its entirety). His macro-structural analysis enables him to find the semantic deep structures of Paul's thought - opposition between justification by faith and through works of the law, Jewish privilege and Gentile salvation as contrary values, the differentiation between good and evil, the problem of the law and the opposition between the spirit and the flesh, and the revelation to Israel as the foundation of salvation for all human beings. Many of the issues mentioned in these survey articles are touched upon in this volume, including rhetorical criticism, various theological concepts, and the issue of the coherence and centre of Paul's theology. One should not expect to find detailed exegesis of passages in this volume, nor an introduction to textlinguistics. Although it is commendable that textlinguistics is being applied to the biblical text, this model is unrepresentative of the field, since it is based upon a model by the linguist Noam Chomsky (Appendix I discusses this model), and the descriptive conventions of Johannes Louw.³⁵ It fails to deal with what most of those who work in that field would call textlinguistics. More pertinent are Boers's observations on Paul's thought, especially the sets of oppositions brought to the fore by his semiotic model. Whereas these appear to be contradictory, especially the idea that Paul accepts justification both through works and by faith, these can, according to Boers, be explained in the light of Paul's purpose of proclaiming a Christianity in which no particular group is privileged over another. The conclusions are consistent with the new perspective on Paul.

The prison epistles

If we consider the so-called prison epistles of Paul together, the following books are worth noting. The most important commentary I have seen on these letters is by Peter O'Brien on Philippians.³⁶ In the New International Greek Testament Commentary Series, it not only requires Greek to be fully appreciated, but is a detailed exegetical commentary with abundant reference to secondary literature. Although the introduction is relatively short compared to the rest of the commentary, it provides the basic information. O'Brien opts for authorship in Rome late in Paul's imprisonment there, against partition theories that Philippians is made up of several letters, and for personal rivalry and antagonism to Paul, as opposed to Judaizers as the opponents. The commentary usually offers detailed analysis, including 85 pages on Philippians. 2:6-11 alone (15 per cent of the commentary). The conclusions are consistently conservative. Despite the fact that I find myself frequently disagreeing with O'Brien's conclusions or his reasons for his conclusions, and missed quite a few important references to the secondary literature, I highly recommend this commentary as the place to go to find out what the range of scholarly opinion on a given issue is. To be noted also is Ben Witherington III's commentary on Philippians. Whereas O'Brien is inclusive in his approach, briefly mentioning rhetorical criticism, Witherington has sold out to ancient rhetorical analysis.³⁷ Finding inspiration from the work of Duane Watson (see above), Witherington provides an analysis of the letter as if it were an ancient speech or oration in epistolary form. Although

³⁴ Cf. also I. -G. Hong, *The Law in Galatians* (JSNTS 81; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), who explores similar concepts using a similar methodology.

³⁵ See, for example, J. P. Louw, *A Semantic Discourse Analysis of Romans* (University of Pretoria: Department of Greek, 1987).

³⁶ P.T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Carlisle: Paternoster / Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991).

³⁷ B. Witherington, III, *Friendship and Finances in Philippi: The Letter of Paul to the Philippians* (The NT in Context; Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994).

Witherington does offer an able defence of many of the traditional conclusions regarding the book, including using rhetorical criticism to 'prove' the letter's unity, there are a number of judgements that I simply cannot accept. Some of these are matters of interpretation of the autobiographical element present in the book at various places (e.g. Phil. 3:1-7),

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and others are on the basis of his dependence upon ancient rhetorical analysis. Knowledge of Greek is not necessary for using this commentary, although some of Witherington's decisions are based upon his understanding of the Greek text, though not always convincingly. It is also worth noting that the commentary on Philippians by Moises Silva has been re-issued by a new publisher. Although brief, it discusses the Greek text in an enlightening way.³⁸

I have come across two commentaries on Colossians. They are very different in scope and approach. Petr Pokorny has produced a commentary reviewed by me in this journal, whose substance I need not repeat here.³⁹ Although he rejects Pauline authorship of the letter, Pokorny takes seriously the relationship of the letter to the Pauline corpus, outlining the trajectory of Paul's thought. The commentary utilizes the Greek text, but knowledge of Greek is not necessary. At many places there are useful insights, although I am not convinced by Pokorny's arguments for non-Pauline authorship. Besides debatable statements regarding the use of a scribe, and failure to address fully the issues of pseudonymity, Pokorny spiritualizes the issue of the continued usefulness of Colossians in the church. I think we need better explanations than that. By contrast, Murray Harris's grammatical commentary on Colossians and Philemon⁴⁰ is less a commentary than, as the series title implies, a set of exegetical exercises. After the briefest of introductions to Colossians, in which he argues for Pauline authorship primarily on the basis of its relationship to Philemon, Harris offers a verse-by-verse exegetical guide, including comments on structure, parsings of just about every word, comments on the phrasing, translation, expanded paraphrase, bibliography and preaching outlines, with an outline of the entire book at the end. He does the same with Philemon. The value of this commentary, which is heralded as the first of twenty in the series, is obvious, for getting the nuts and bolts of the language. Obviously it requires some previous knowledge of Greek. There are two distinct limitations, however. The first is that Harris offers theological judgements throughout, but it is often very difficult to see how they emerge from the text read apart from a previous theological framework. The second is that since Harris restricts himself to traditional grammatical tools and categories, much of the recent work in the area is not recognized or even cited. This is not a substitute for further linguistic study. Worth noting as well is Robert Wall's commentary on Colossians and Philemon.⁴¹ Wall is one of the most able canonical critics of the NT, and this comes through especially in the introductions in his commentary.⁴² He faces the issues of authorship squarely, concluding that Paul probably was the author of both books, but he also raises important issues regarding canon and the importance of theological issues, rather than historical ones, in its formation. Although I have

³⁸ M. Silva, *Philippians* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the NT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994, originally published in 1988 by Moody Press in Chicago).

³⁹ P. Pokorny, *Colossians: A Commentary*, trans. S.S. Schatzmann (Peabody, MA: 40 Hendrickson, 1991), reviewed in *Themelios* 18.3 (1993), pp. 27-8.

⁴⁰ M.J. Harris, *Colossians and Philemon* (Exegetical Guide to the Greek NT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991).

⁴¹ R.W. Wall, *Colossians and Philemon* (IVP NT Commentary Series; Leicester: IVP, 42 1993).

⁴² See R. W. Wall and E.E. Lemcio, *The New Testament as Canon: A Reader in Canonical Criticism* (JSNTS 76; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), with chs 7-11 on the letters of the NT.

entered into debate with Wall over these issues,⁴³ I appreciate his raising them in a commentary, and hence his making canonical criticism a part of the exegetical enterprise. While in places he appears to follow too closely Harris's judgements on the Greek and Bartchy's on slavery, in all, this is a very satisfying English-language commentary for preachers.

Martin Kitchen has written an intriguing commentary on Ephesians,⁴⁴ mixing literary, historical and social-scientific approaches, according to the remit of this series. It is not a traditional commentary, offering two chapters on introductory issues, including a lengthy discussion of pseudonymous authorship of the letter, which the author defends, and then five chapters of commentary. These chapters do not attempt to comment on the entire book, but select what the author sees as important concepts and sections. He begins with an extended word study of the word translated in Ephesians 1:10 as 'to sum up', and uses this as the governing rubric for the commentary. Although the author raises a number of interesting questions regarding what it means for a book to be both historical and literary, as well as what it means to write a commentary, there are a number of unresolved issues here. This is probably not the commentary to go to first for an overview of the letter.

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So far as monographs or books are concerned, there are four to consider. The first is by Karl Donfried and Howard Marshall on the Thessalonian letters, Philippians and Philemon.⁴⁵ Although designed to be a short theology of these books, in many ways the volume resembles more standard introductions. Donfried, writing on Thessalonians, works from a rhetorical analysis of the letters.⁴⁶ He discusses the major critical issues, concluding that 2 Thessalonians is not authentically Pauline. There is only one chapter on theology, and such topics as 'sanctification' and eschatology and apocalyptic are given surprisingly short shrift. Marshall's treatment seems to fulfil the goal of the series more fully. He works from an epistolary form, and has generally good chapters on the supposed hymn of Philippians 2:6-11 and other theological topics, clearly emphasizing the christological dimension of the book (and questioning the new perspective on Paul). His discussion of Philemon recognizes that Paul is consciously constructing his argument to maximize its effect, a point that warrants further comment. In the same series, the volume by Andrew Lincoln and Alexander Wedderburn treats Ephesians and Colossians (although the biblical books are treated in reverse order in the volume, despite the authorial order on the cover and title page).⁴⁷ Wedderburn's discussion of Colossians is very much in the mode of a standard introduction, including discussion of background issues and relating Colossians to the rest of the NT. (He

⁴³ See S.E. Porter, 'Pauline authorship and the Pastoral Epistles: implications for canon', *BBR* 5 (1995), pp. 105-23 [http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/pastoral-epistles_porter.pdf]; R.W. Wall, 'Pauline authorship and the Pastoral Epistles: a response to S.E. Porter', *BBR* 5 (1995), pp. 125-8 [http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/pastoral-epistles_wall.pdf]; S.E. Porter, 'Pauline authorship and the Pastoral Epistles: a response to R. W. Wall's response', *BBR* 6 (1996) [http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/pastoral-epistles2_porter.pdf].

⁴⁴ M. Kitchen, *Ephesians* (NT Readings; London: Routledge, 1994).

⁴⁵ K.P. Donfried and H. Marshall, *The Theology of the Shorter Pauline Letters* (NT Theology; Cambridge: CUP, 1993).

⁴⁶ See also C.J. Schlueter, *Filling up the Measure: Polemical Hyperbole in 1 Thessalonians 2.14-16* (JSNTS 98; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994).

⁴⁷ A.T. Lincoln and A.J.M. Wedderburn, *The Theology of the Later Pauline Letters* (NT Theology; Cambridge: CUP, 1993).

accepts that the letter is not by Paul, although this is not adequately discussed, to my mind.)⁴⁸ The supposed hymn of Colossians 1:15-20 is central to the letter's theology, in Wedderburn's analysis, a point that is worth making. Lincoln's analysis of Ephesians reflects the perspective of his recent commentary.⁴⁹ Although he used to accept Pauline authorship of Ephesians, Lincoln now accepts pseudonymous authorship. This volume is consistent with that viewpoint, and addresses the issue of the letter's background and its relationship to the rest of the Pauline corpus and the NT. The largest chapter is devoted to the theology of Ephesians, and it is a very instructive chapter. Lincoln concentrates on those addressed by the letter, and defines who they are, where they came from in relation to salvation, where they are going eschatologically, and how they should live in an ethical sense. Since he concentrates upon the language of the text, this is a very effective introduction to the thought of the letter. Ernest Best has provided a guide to Ephesians,⁵⁰ which in many ways amounts to a short commentary. In the first substantive chapter he introduces the critical questions, essentially through a discussion of authorship, weighing both sides of the question. The second substantive chapter is a summary of the contents of the letter, almost a small commentary in itself. And the third deals with major themes, such as the Church. A last volume worth comment is *Ephesos Metropolis of Asia*,⁵¹ a volume of essays from varying perspectives (including archaeology, social history, Greco-Roman religion, and Hellenistic art and architecture), providing a wealth of information on a city important to the Pauline missionary movement. This is an interesting background study.

The Pastoral Epistles

The Pastoral Epistles have been a neglected area of Pauline studies. The reason has been that they have long been considered to be pseudonymous, and probably a lot later than other supposedly pseudonymous Pauline letters, such as Ephesians. In his recent commentary in the New International Greek Testament Commentary Series, George Knight courageously bucks the tide and argues strongly for Pauline authorship.⁵² Although I do not think that he always makes the most convincing case, sometimes relying too much on the opinions of others, I think that he is probably right in his conclusions. The exegesis is heavily dependent upon knowledge of the Greek, especially since Knight uses lexical tools as his main avenue of exegesis (counting word frequency, *etc.*). The result is an exegesis that is sometimes a little wooden and not as sensitive to recent developments regarding epistolary conventions, Greek grammar and literary features as it might be. Knight usually faces hard decisions squarely, although at a few points he takes what I consider to be a more theological than exegetical solution. In all, however, this is

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⁴⁸ See also T.J. Sappington, *Revelation and Redemption at Colossae* (JSNTS 53; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991); R.E. DeMaris, *The Colossian Controversy: Wisdom in Dispute at Colossae* (JSNTS 96; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994); T.W. Martin, *By Philosophy and Empty Deceit: Colossians as Response to a Cynic Critique* (JSNTS 118; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

⁴⁹ A.T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC 42; Dallas: Word, 1990).

⁵⁰ E. Best, *Ephesians* (NT Guides; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993).

⁵¹ H. Koester (ed.), *Ephesos Metropolis of Asia: An Interdisciplinary Approach to its Archaeology, Religion, and Culture* (Harvard Theological Studies 41; Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995).

⁵² G.W. Knight, III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Carlisle: Paternoster / Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992).

a highly readable commentary that does not get bogged down in unnecessary arguments, and provides a fair study of the issues involved. Philip Towner is to be commended for facing the evidence against Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles in his commentary designed for pastors.⁵³ Even though he concludes that Paul probably wrote them, he stresses that what they teach is more important. Unfortunately, the commentary itself will probably prove a disappointment for those who are looking for clearly stated exegetical conclusions. At more than a few places, Towner seems to shy away from the force of the passage, and at several crucial places he states that a theological application cannot be made on the basis of the passage apart from consideration of a larger theological framework. As sensible as this advice is, the constant recourse to the other side of the hermeneutical circle is bound to leave the reader unsatisfied.

As a last volume I mention Frances Young's short theology of the Pastoral Epistles.⁵⁴ As noted above, perhaps more than any other Pauline letters, the Pastoral Epistles occupy a troubled place in Pauline studies, neglected and overshadowed by other letters. Consequently, they do not receive the attention they deserve, whether they are Pauline or not. Of course, the fact that the majority of scholars believe them to be clearly pseudonymous does not increase their attractiveness for scholarly discussion. Young has had an opportunity to set much of this situation right in this short theological guide. I do not think that the opportunity has been seized, however. There is an unfortunate detachment from the latest - and some of the most important - bibliography, and the result is a lack of coming to grips with these letters in the way they deserve. There seem to me to be too many assumptions regarding date and authorship, as well as a number of generalizations (often without adequate support) regarding the contents, perspective and theology. In her attempt to show the relevance of the letters, Young does raise some interesting issues regarding the ethics of reading. These comments are worth thinking about.

Conclusion

This survey has not been able to provide any more than a cursory glance at a number of recent works in Pauline studies. More space would not have helped the situation greatly, however, since this kind of article can only ever point in the direction of a number of books (or away from some others). It is worth summarizing at this point some of the major themes and issues that have emerged from this variety of books. I have sought to comment both on the usefulness of the volumes, and on their contents.

With regard to their usefulness, the books I have cited in the two parts of my survey fall into a number of categories, which I hope I have indicated clearly. Some of the volumes are introductory in nature, and can be consulted at almost any time for a variety of purposes, including getting basic information for Paul, starting reading on a subject, or simply gaining the pleasure of reading a book in a field of interest, whether that interest is well-informed or simply rudimentary. A good volume in this regard is the introduction to Paul by C.K. Barrett. Some of the volumes are more focused upon particular books within the Pauline corpus. These usually take the form of commentaries, although there are a number of other guides as well. Commentaries are difficult reading, and it is an unusual person who enjoys sitting down and ploughing through an entire commentary from cover to cover. In many ways, their best

⁵³ P.H. Towner, *1-2 Timothy and Titus* (IVP NT Commentary Series; Leicester: IVP, 1994).

⁵⁴ F. Young, *The Theology of the Pastoral Letters* (NT Theology; Cambridge: CUP, 1994).

use is as reference tools. I have tried to offer some information on the level of their comments. Whereas one can probably benefit most from reading at or above one's level of knowledge, it is probably not advisable to read commentaries below one's level. Thus if one has some Greek, those commentaries strictly on the English text will usually not be nearly as fulfilling as those on the Greek text. Some of the volumes are focused upon particular topics. Sometimes these

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are topics that span a portion of Paul's mission or a number of books in the Pauline corpus, or sometimes they concentrate upon a particular book. Sometimes the topics can be quite highly specialized. I have spent less time with these kinds of volumes because their use is restricted. If one is interested in this particular topic or the particular book addressed, of course they are valuable reading. But they are probably not the first or even the second book one wants to pick up.

As regards content: in surveying this material, some of which I have gone back to and re-read after first reading it some time ago, I have been struck by a number of issues, some of which need further investigation. The first is that there are a number of major presuppositions governing much of the work that is done in Pauline studies. For example, there are those who accept the Sanders and Dunn new perspective on Paul. It is not surprising that those who do so exegete the text with this in mind and find support for this hypothesis. There are others, however, who do not accept this hypothesis. My impression from reading the works above is that the new perspective has now become the governing hypothesis, and that those who accept it do not feel nearly as much compelled to defend it as those who disagree with it feel compelled to respond to it. In any case, the final word is far from stated on this topic, as recent research (some cited above) indicates. Another of the presuppositions is with regard to Pauline authorship. As noted above, a number of scholars simply accept the seven-book Pauline corpus, and their work is not as concerned with the other six books. Again, some simply assume this; others feel compelled at least to explain, if not defend, their choice, while others dispute it altogether. Even though many consider these matters settled, with the recent discussion of canonical issues coming into prominence, the final word again remains unspoken.

A second feature to notice is the lack of balance in quantity of writing on the various topics and books. It is obvious that certain of the Pauline letters attract more attention than others. There are a variety of reasons for this, many of them historical in nature. Certain books have been at the centre of Pauline study for a number of years, while others' positions have become more tenuous in recent times, especially in the light of reassessment of the authenticity of Pauline authorship. The same is true, however, regarding a number of topics. One can see that not only does the new perspective get discussed, but the rhetoric of the Pauline letters has also become a topic of frequent discussion. Other topics, for example Pauline chronology, are not nearly so widely discussed.

Thirdly, and following on from the point above, there is the place of ancient rhetoric in recent Pauline studies. Whereas a previous generation of scholars was concerned with defining Pauline epistolary form, especially in the light of publication of numerous papyri from Egypt, recent discussion has tended to place rhetorical analysis of the letters alongside, if not in place of, this epistolary analysis. There are a number of assumptions being made by those scholars

who utilize the categories of ancient rhetoric to analyse the Pauline epistles, although these are often not debated. More attention certainly needs to be devoted to the issue of the legitimacy of applying ancient categories of speeches to letters and the claims made for such applications, especially since the ancients did not seem to do it.

Lastly, the amount of work on Paul's world, including not only his Jewish world, which has been studied for some time, but also the Greco-Roman world in which he lived and travelled, is to be welcomed. We appear to be gaining significant insights into the more thoroughly integrated nature of this world, in which it is difficult to make simple generalizations or create stereotypes about the differences between Palestine and the rest of the Greco-Roman world. These background studies have direct implications for studying the Pauline cities, and also implications for studying particular passages in Paul's letters. Although technical language-based studies are only a small part of this discussion, with the resources available more can certainly be done. The emphasis upon appreciation of the social world of the first century adds an important dimension to our knowledge of the theological dimension of Paul's thought.

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