

BOOK REVIEW

Michelle V. Lee, *Paul, the Stoics, and the Body of Christ* (SNTSMS, 137; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). xiii + 224 pp. Hbk. US\$90.00.

A significant amount of attention has been devoted to the study of the relationship between Paul and the Greco-Roman world. One avenue of this research, which has been developed (especially) recently by scholars like Malherbe, Glad, and Engberg-Pedersen, has focused upon situating Paul within the context of Hellenistic philosophy. Michelle Lee seeks to make a contribution to this growing corpus of literature by setting Paul's body metaphor in 1 Corinthians against the background of Stoic notions of body.

The book is divided into two major sections. In the first section Lee argues that previous interpreters of body language in Paul have been misled methodologically in their preoccupations with finding 'the source' of the body metaphor. She suggests that a more promising line of analysis is found in an attempt to locate the 'context' or 'background' for the motif. As one might imagine from the title of the book, Lee's conviction is that Stoicism offers precisely such a context. In order to set the stage for her analysis, Lee provides a detailed treatment of the notion of body in Stoicism and plots out some of the implications of the Stoic conception for universal humanity (corporality) and ethics. Lee's summary illustrates that the Stoics typically understood the universe as a 'body' and as a living being, which is 'a unified body through πνεῦμα and is governed by νοῦς' (p. 57). The Stoics, as well as Cicero, 'applied the concept of a bodily universe to a bodily unity of humanity and the gods and used this as the basis for their ethical systems' (p. 101).

The second major portion of the book compares the use of body language in 1 Corinthians 12, 1–4 and 13–14 with Stoic understandings of body. The articulation of the gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 in correlation with body language parallels the Stoic notion of the bodily oneness of

humanity and the ethical obligations that this entails. This resembles Seneca's project aimed at uniting 'principles and precepts' through employing bodily unity as a foundation for social ethics, according to Lee. The focus of the brief analysis of 1 Corinthians 1–4 is upon *νοῦς Χριστοῦ*. This uniquely Christian ideal replaces the more general Stoic understanding of the body being governed by 'reason' or 'mind' (*νοῦς*). The final chapter deals with the 'Application of the Body of Christ'. Throughout chs. 12–14, Lee insists, Paul utilizes a strategy similar to Seneca's presentation of principles and precepts. This is particularly evident in chs. 13–14 where Paul grounds his exhortations on 'how to deal with men' in the reality that the community is 'all part of the great body' (p. 197). The book concludes with a helpful summary chapter that ties some of major threads and arguments together into a coherent account. According to Lee, the evidence suggests 'that Paul is influenced by Stoicism in the way in which he conceives of the Corinthians as a unified body through their membership in the universal new humanity'. She continues: 'Paul desires to instruct the Corinthian community so that they may truly grasp their corporate identity in Christ' (p. 200).

Lee's monograph makes a helpful contribution to New Testament scholarship in several ways. First, her study provides an important summary of ancient philosophical thought that may be related to an important Pauline concept. Surveys like the one we find in the first half of her book provide valuable and accessible topical guides to ancient literature, regardless of how convincing the author is in exploiting specific parallels to individual biblical motifs. Secondly, Lee's emphasis on the Greco-Roman dimension of Pauline literature is welcome and on track. In my view, the connection between classical scholarship and New Testament studies is one that has not been emphasized enough in contemporary research. It is an important aspect of scholarship that hopefully will attract much future exploration. The New Testament was conceived in a thoroughly Hellenized environment, and attempts like Lee's to make this connection more explicit are a much-needed contribution. Thirdly, Lee makes a convincing case for the connection of the body metaphor to ethics. This aspect of her analysis provides helpful insights into the paraenetic strategy of Paul in 1 Corinthians 12–14.

One of the major weaknesses of the book, however, is the analysis of various structural features in 1 Corinthians 12–14. The 'relationship

between Christ and the Corinthians as his body' is supposedly illustrated by a macro-chiasm that runs across ch. 12. Setting aside for now the fact that we have no conceptual or rhetorical discussion of chiasmus until the fourth century with Ps.-Hermogenes, the structure that Lee provides has very little grounding in the formal features of the text. She claims to employ a 'text-linguistic' method involving 'hooked key words', but in my view this is merely an uncritical incorporation of Guthrie's eclectic model which actually combines linguistic and literary forms of analysis—at this point she draws upon the literary not the linguistic dimension of Guthrie's method. These types of literary features have found very little discussion among linguists working in the field of discourse analysis or text-linguistics.

Lee does not note abbreviated forms of the formulas that occur earlier, which, incidentally, has implications for her discussion of 12.1-3. But her analysis of full disclosure formulas is helpful in many respects and does, in fact, provide a reliable literary guide to the structure of the discourse. I think that her point would have been strengthened, however, had she not followed Sanders's overly stringent criteria for identifying formulas which restricts the finite verb to a single lexeme, θέλω, and is based solely upon fuller expressions of the formula. Unlike White, Sanders only treats fuller versions of the formula common later in the Roman period, which often do employ θέλω. But the formula had actually begun to develop much earlier, in the Ptolemaic period, without a verb for desire, using the imperative or the participle instead of the infinitive for the knowing verb and being employed mainly to frame epistolary material through use in the openings and closings of the body of the epistle (e.g. *P.Yale* 36; *P.Oxy.* 744). And there are plenty of instances of the formula throughout the papyri that utilize, for example, βούλομαι instead of θέλω (e.g. *P.Oxy.* XIV 1680). Thus, it is any verb for desire, not just θέλω, that is used to construct the formula. This would have strengthened Lee's case in her analysis of 1 Corinthians 15, which employs γνωρίζω, compounding lexically the notions of desir-ing and knowing (we see this in the papyri as well, e.g. *P.Mich.* I 32; see also Gal. 1.11). She follows Sanders in identifying this as a 'transition formula', but I think this instance clearly fits into Paul's literary strategy to structure the text through *disclosure* formulas. A similar effect is created in 12.3.

The analysis of 12.4-11 is grounded in the author's use of *inclusio* (τὸ αὐτό in 12.4-6 and 12.11). But again, I think this is a fairly

subjective criterion. I imagine that if we consistently marked off sections based on the first and second occurrences of particular words or phrases in 1 Corinthians or any New Testament book, we would come up with some fairly awkward section divisions. I do not deny that repetition may play an important role in structuring a text, but I wonder whether it can serve single-handedly as a reliable diagnostic for unit delineation.

These points on literary and linguistic structure notwithstanding, Michelle Lee makes a fine contribution to the ongoing discussion of Paul and his Hellenistic contemporaries. I deeply appreciate the recent agenda to place Paul in his Greco-Roman context, and scholars interested in exploring this relation will find Lee's book to be a valuable addition to this project.

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