

BOOK REVIEW

Stanley E. Porter (ed.), *Paul and his Theology* (PAST, 3; Leiden: Brill, 2006). xiii + 454 pp. Hdbk. US\$168.00.

As editor of the third volume of the recently inaugurated PAST series on Pauline Studies, Stanley Porter has assembled another excellent collection of essays—this time, dealing with Paul’s theology—by a reputable team of international scholars. A wide range of topics is covered in the book. The first several essays are organized loosely according to the level of treatment that various topics have received in contemporary scholarship. The final five essays are grouped together according to topic, two dealing with the Trinity, one dealing with Paul, exorcism and healing, and two dealing with Paul’s interpreters. Unfortunately, purchasing this valuable compendium of modern Pauline scholarship will be difficult for many, due to its steep price, but we can hope that Brill will reprint the series in paperback in the years to come.

The first chapter by Porter, ‘Is There a Center to Paul’s Theology? An Introduction to the Study of Paul and his Theology’, helpfully navigates several key issues in Pauline theology, including various approaches to and definitions of Pauline theology, proposed centers for Pauline thought, the contingency/timelessness of truths in Paul, and the role of the Pauline canon (and its limits) in providing material for constructing a Pauline theology. Porter’s essay closes by broadly surveying the essays in the volume and their relations to one another.

Arland J. Hultgren explores ‘The Scriptural Foundations for Paul’s Mission to the Gentiles’ and puts forward the provocative suggestion that Paul’s mission was directed toward the nations (ἔθνη) rather than individual Gentiles—it was a corporate and eschatologically defined mission. This national orientation in Paul’s calling then motivated his missionary strategy: ‘If Paul considered himself an apostle to the “Gentiles” as individual persons, he would not have had to travel beyond Antioch and Syria’ (p. 25). The essay is well argued and makes an important contribution, but I would have expected some interaction

with Paul's use of *κόσμος* and surrounding terminology in Rom. 11.13-16 (at least in a footnote—though the meaning of firstfruits in 11.16 is briefly addressed) and more clarity on the use of terminology when referring to Paul's use of Old Testament passages (what is meant by allusion versus citation, etc.). At some point Hultgren will probably also need to address Paul's statement of his apostolic mission in Gal. 2.1, where later in the context he clearly uses *ἔθνη* to refer to individuals, but this obstacle should not be too difficult to overcome.

David Hay's essay, 'Paul's Understanding of Faith as Participation', argues that 'faith, for Paul, is the mode by which Christians participate or live spiritually in Christ' (p. 52). This participatory notion is quite reminiscent of the participatory eschatological frameworks of Deissmann, Schweitzer, Sanders, and a number of other scholars promoting Pauline mysticism in one form or another. Hay spends a significant portion of his essay arguing for the subjective rendering of *πίστις Χριστοῦ*, pointing to a number of instances where *πίστις* means faithfulness. What he fails to take into consideration, however, is the fact that it never means faithfulness when it is modified by (i.e. follows) a preposition, as it is in the seven typically debated Pauline passages. In any case, Hay suggests that believers further share in the faithfulness of Christ in their daily obedience.

James R. Harrison's essay, 'Paul, Theologian of Electing Grace', reviews the treatment of grace in systematic and biblical theologies and concludes that they entirely neglect the necessary cultural contexts for understanding the concept. He suggests instead understanding grace against an imperial backdrop. The essay helpfully attempts to bring together a number of interdisciplinary perspectives on the issue. Harrison at least seems to accept the major assumption of the New Perspective on Paul that first-century Judaism was quite variegated and not essentially merit-based. He appeals to this type of Jewish background for Paul's terminology while at the same time seeking to draw connections with Greco-Roman conceptions, specifically in honorific inscriptions of the Greek east. Numerous parallels are made to Augustan eschatology, which are not always as obvious as Harris insists.

'Paul, the Law and the Spirit' is considered by Colin G. Kruse. The essay helpfully fills out the conception of the law in Paul's understanding by considering its relation to the Spirit through an analysis of 2 Cor. 3.7-11 and several passages from Galatians and Romans. He argues that Paul's view of the law was not entirely negative, drawing

attention to the Spirit's work of writing the law on the Gentile's heart and causing the believer to fulfill the law.

Stanley E. Porter weighs in on a topic of previous interest by considering two recent works on reconciliation. The first of these is by Seyoon Kim. Porter's major criticism here is that Kim's argument from 2 Cor. 5.18-20 that Paul's view of reconciliation originated in 2 Cor. 5.18-20 is based on a mistaken understanding of how temporality is indexed in the verbal system, specifically in participial forms. Porter then directly addresses his proposed 'Allusions to the Damascus Event', showing Kim's analysis to be fairly unconvincing. The second work considered by Porter is by Ralph Martin, who is also faulted for theologizing tense-forms unnecessarily, basing certain conclusions on a past-time understanding of the aorist. He finally turns to criticize Martin's suggestion that Paul was not the inventor of his notion of reconciliation. Since part of Martin's case is based on Kim's proposal, this does not turn out to be too difficult.

Randall Tan proposes an interpretive model for Paul's letters that will help scholars 'Color outside the Lines'. The title of the essay reflects the fact that Tan intends to incorporate new computer and systemic-functional linguistics based methods for reflecting on the center of Paul's thought. He uses Halliday's model of field, tenor and mode. I think the only problem for his model will be finding ways to consistently formally ground Halliday's process types in the Greek language. The method is tested with examples from the thanksgiving portion of the letter to the Romans.

Paul's discussions of the temple metaphor in the Corinthian letters are examined by John R. Levison in his essay, 'Spirit and Temple in Paul's Letters to the Corinthians'. The essay is well structured around three key passages—1 Cor. 3.16-17; 6.19; 2 Cor. 6.14–7:1—arguing that through these passages Paul provides 'an image of the church as a spirit-filled temple that lives within a tension: it is unifying and universal in scope, open to the nations, and, at its best, devoted as well to purity and holiness' (p. 213).

The longest essay in the volume (65 pages) is by Heinz Giesen, 'Eschatology in Philippians'. He argues that Phil. 1.23 teaches us that Paul understood the completion of salvation to occur at death and that, in general, Paul does not evidence a belief in the immanent parousia in Philippians or any of his other writings. Whatever traces of such a belief can be detected are the result of belief in an imminent parousia

among communities to which he was writing. Giesen's reading of eschatology in Philippians, therefore, is often quite realized in its perspective.

Craig L. Blomberg seeks a mediating position in discussion of Paul and gender in his essay, 'Neither Hierarchalist nor Egalitarian: Gender Roles in Paul'. I must agree with Blomberg's assertion that Gal. 3.28 should have no significant place in the discussion since gender roles are not under consideration in the context. Blomberg views 1 Timothy specifically within the context of Ephesus, which does not seem to do justice to the register of the letter, which is clearly personal rather than ecumenical in direction. His personal position is certainly more egalitarian than it is complementarian, but Paul was not an egalitarian—though he 'comes tantalizingly close to egalitarianism at numerous junctures' (p. 326). Yet since Paul's commands were relativized to the culture in Ephesus and in the broader Hellenistic world, we have warrant for recasting them in our present culture which has changed considerably since Paul wrote.

Ron C. Fay assesses trinitarian overtones in Romans 8 in his essay, 'Was Paul a Trinitarian? A Look at Romans 8'. He states that New Testament scholars investigating early Christian belief in Christ's deity usually adopt a 'New Testament theology approach' (p. 327), which to my mind is not entirely accurate. The most dominant approaches have been variations of the history-of-religions school's approach—although less frequently there have been more biblical-theologically oriented approaches. Gabriel, in the next essay in the volume, even alludes to this when he says that scholars have realized 'that the doctrine of the Trinity is not biblical theology, but rather a product of systematic theology' (p. 347). Fay's exegesis is convincing throughout, especially the analysis of 'in Christ' in Rom. 8.2, against Dunn's view that the phrase modifies ἡλευθέρωσεν. His conclusions are controlled and not overstated, suggesting that an implicit trinitarian framework is at work, but his analysis probably could have been strengthened by extending it at least to Romans 9.

'Pauline Pneumatology and the Question of Trinitarian Presuppositions', by Andrew K. Gabriel, continues this discussion, focusing more specifically on Paul's understanding of the Holy Spirit. Gabriel's assumptions and methodology are heavily dependent on the work of two evangelical scholars, Thomas Schreiner and Gordon Fee, which could be read by some to direct the conclusions, but the suggested

interpretive framework seems sound, nevertheless. The essay focuses on three sets of passages: (1) triadic texts, where all three members of the Trinity are mentioned in a verse, (2) Christ/Spirit texts, where Christ and the Spirit are mentioned together, being distinguished from God, and (3) Pauline passages on the Holy Spirit. Gabriel concludes that while explicit trinitarian statements are lacking in Paul, his 'letters do exhibit trinitarian presuppositions' (p. 362). Those convinced of Paul's trinitarian theology will find much here to confirm their beliefs, but it is doubtful whether this essay will present serious difficulties for those not already convinced—nevertheless, it provides an important confirmatory piece in the argument for trinitarian theology in Paul and could provide a valuable contribution to a larger cumulative case where Christology is more central.

In 'Paul the Exorcist and Healer', Craig A. Evans turns to the Paul of Acts. After briefly touching on hints of his theme in Paul's letters, Evans provides a detailed treatment of Paul's exorcism and healing ministry in Acts, set in relation to Gospel exorcism and healing contexts. His analysis provides three helpful conclusions. First, it demonstrates that Paul's credentials were like those of the other apostles who were sent out to heal and cast out demons in Jesus' name. Secondly, Paul's credentials were equal to those of Peter. Thirdly, this theme for Paul's life in Acts coheres with a number of statements in his letters. Each conclusion furthers our understanding of early Christianity and especially of the relation between Luke's Paul and the Paul of the letters.

René Kieffer considers 'The Interpretation of the Letter to the Romans in Melanchthon's *Loci Communes* from 1521'. He argues that the implied reader of Melanchthon's work is a humanist or theologian and that it would have been rhetorically effective in convincing or at least stumping this audience. The essay accomplishes this modest task well.

The final essay, by Jan de Villiers, is 'Adolf Deissmann: A Re-appraisal of his Work, Especially his Views on Mysticism'. The analysis of Deissmann in this essay is clear and analytically helpful. Deissmann's basis for Pauline Christ-mysticism in 'in Christ'/'Christ in' language, and Deissmann's so-called mystical genitive or genitive of fellowship reading of πίστις Χριστοῦ occupy a great deal of attention. Longenecker and Hooker are featured as modern scholars who are sympathetic toward each of these views respectively and de Villiers

seems to have similar sympathies. The mystical genitive is hard to maintain, however, again not considering the role of the preposition in determining the selection of the sense for the lexeme πίστις.

The few minor points of criticism already mentioned above dealing with issues of content notwithstanding, Porter has assembled a very important collection of essays here, focusing on Paul's theology. Each essay makes a substantial contribution to our understanding of Paul and the volume as a whole presses discussions forward in significant ways. The essays are diverse and engaging, looking at a wide range of important topics. The πίστις Χριστοῦ controversy, the role of participatory theology and Pauline pneumatology are significant themes that are featured in a number of the essays throughout the volume. This will be an important work to own, if you can afford it, and essential reading for those interested in contemporary discussions of the apostle's theology.

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