

EXPOSITOR'S BIBLE COMMENTARY, VOLUME TEN: A REVIEW ARTICLE

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The purpose of the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* as stated by the general editor is "to provide preachers, teachers, and students with a new and comprehensive commentary on the New and Old Testaments." The commentary assumes the position of traditional evangelicalism regarding the inspiration, trustworthiness and authority of Scripture. It follows the "grammatico-historical" method of exegesis and strives to give a fair presentation of varying positions in controversial matters.

The *NIV* is used throughout, although other versions are often cited in the exposition of any given passage. The commentary on each book is preceded by an introduction, outline and bibliography that attempt to elucidate the historical situation and define specific concerns necessary for proper interpretation of the text. The exposition of each passage is followed by notes on textual considerations. For those unfamiliar with the Biblical languages, all Greek and Hebrew words are transliterated in parentheses.

The volume here under review is remarkably free of typographical errors and is the first of twelve to be published. It includes commentaries on Romans (by Everett F. Harrison), First Corinthians (W. Harold Mare), Second Corinthians (Murray J. Harris) and Galatians (James Montgomery Boice). An evaluative summary of the thesis and development of each commentary followed by an assessment of the volume as a whole in the light of recent Pauline scholarship will constitute the remainder of this review.

According to Harrison, Paul wrote Romans from Corinth in A. D. 57. He rejects the view of T. W. Manson that the letter was sent to both Rome and Ephesus with chap. 16 added as an introduction to his Asian readers. The writing of Romans was occasioned by three considerations: (1) Paul's desire to preach the gospel in Spain and, in this light, to establish Rome as a base of operations comparable to Antioch in the east; (2) Paul's feeling of impending doom (Rom 15:31), which motivated him to write a letter "so systematic and comprehensive" that the Roman Church would be able to carry on the work of Christ in his stead; and (3) Paul's desire to deal with specific problems in the Roman Church, particularly with regard to tensions between Jews and gentiles.

The basic theme of Romans is salvation, presented in terms of the righteousness of God. Harrison demonstrates this thesis passage by pas-

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sage according to the following pattern: (1) the gospel as the revelation of God's righteousness (1:16, 17); (2) the need for salvation (1:18-3:20); (3) justification: the imputation of righteousness (3:21-5:21); (4) sanctification: the impartation of righteousness (6:1-8:39); (5) the problem of Israel: God's righteousness vindicated (9:1-11:36); and (6) the practice of righteousness (12:1-15:13).

The reviewer was left somewhat bewildered by Harrison's discussion of the composition of the Church at Rome. Harrison argues that it was composed of gentile believers. Paul reasons with them as if they were Jews so that they might not lose sight of their OT heritage (p. 9). Yet gradually throughout the commentary we are given the impression that Paul does, in fact, have Jewish readers (pp. 46, 136, 144). Finally we are informed that the Jews are the "weaker brethren" in the Church (14:1) and that Paul wrote 13:1-15:13 in response to tensions between them and the gentiles. No mention is made of the possibility that this section contains paraenetic material that gives no clue as to the composition of the Roman Church or that Paul argues in this fashion because this is the way he had come to preach his gospel in the light of Jewish opposition throughout Asia Minor. By adopting this strategy, Paul would have anticipated any misimpressions that might have cautioned the Roman believers against supporting him in Spain.

For the most part, Harrison's commentary is a model of clarity. For one unfamiliar with his terminology, however, the exposition of 8:28-30 is difficult. Expressions such as "electing purpose," "electing decision" and "divine purpose" that do not indicate "advance awareness or knowledge of someone" (p. 98) are difficult to understand, especially since Harrison sees this passage as of individual rather than corporate significance (p. 101).

Although Harrison lists Johannes Munck's work, *Christ and Israel, an Interpretation of Romans 9-11*, in the bibliography, it is surprising that he makes no mention of it in the discussion on these chapters. A mention of Munck's position on 10:5-8—that Paul enlists a Jewish polemic against Christianity in his own cause—would have been helpful in the exposition of this difficult passage.

W. Harold Mare begins his commentary on First Corinthians with a good summary of the general historical and archaeological data pertinent to the city of Corinth. This is later supplemented by an excursus on pagan worship practices there (pp. 247-248). According to Mare, Paul wrote this epistle "to rectify certain serious doctrinal and moral sins and irregularities of Christian living" (p. 180). Among such "irregularities" was the existence of at least four antagonistic factions, each following its own leader. Since we are not informed how the author reaches this conclusion, a study of Paul's use of *schisma* and *hairesis* would have been helpful at this point and may have revealed that the "factions" were actually only personality clashes rooted in the overestimation of their teachers. In addition to this, Paul deals with problems of sexual immorality (5:1-6:20), marriage (7:1-40), Christian liberty (8:1-11:1), worship in the church (11:2-14:40), and misconceptions regarding the

resurrection of Christ and dead believers (15:1-58).

Mare denies the existence of gnosticism in Corinth, although he seems willing to admit the presence of incipient forms in the Colossian letter. W. Schmithals' work, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, is not listed in the bibliography and is mentioned only in passing in the brief section on this subject in the exposition.

In a series that aims at being "new and comprehensive," the commentary on First Corinthians misses the mark at several points. First, the author seems unaware of several helpful articles that could have been brought to bear on the difficult passages of this epistle. Two examples will suffice here. In 11:2-16, Mare understands the head covering a woman must wear in worship as pointing to "her husband's authority over her" (p. 256). No mention is made of M. Hooker's article, which views the veil as a symbol of a woman's authority to worship as an equal with man before God ("Authority on Her Head," *NTS* 10 [1964] 410-416). Nor is the position that Paul uses an anti-Jewish testimonia familiar to the Corinthians considered in connection with the seeming contradiction of 14:20-25 (J. P. M. Sweet, "A Sign for Unbelievers: Paul's Attitude to Glossolalia," *NTS* 13 [1967] 240-57).

Secondly, the author maintains several positions which, due to either the lack or brevity of defense, remain tentative at best. Among these are the assertions that *en tois teleiois* (2:6) is related to a "saved-unsaved" distinction; that *sophia* designates "God's eternal plan of salvation" rather than some kind of ethical teaching (2:7); that Paul's admonitions against marriage (7:1-40) reflect some other crisis than the events that precipitate the end; that Paul had access to notes on a gospel; and that glossolalia is not ecstatic utterances but rather foreign languages similar to Acts 2:4 ff. In addition, the author's comment on 14:33-36 attempts to resolve the seeming contradiction between that passage and 11:2-16 by asserting that chap. 11 deals with women in private worship while chap. 14 discusses women in public worship (cf. B. B. Warfield, "Women Speaking in the Church," *The Presbyterian* [1919] 8-9). Yet the commentary on 11:2-16 makes no mention of private worship and states the purpose of the passage as pertaining to the place of woman "both in public worship and in her relationship to the man" (p. 255).

The commentary on Second Corinthians by Murray J. Harris is current and fair. Harris dates the epistle in the fall of 56. Two circumstances prompted its composition: (1) the meeting of Paul and Titus at Macedonia, at which time Paul learned the favorable response of the Corinthians to the "severe letter"; and (2) the disturbing report of new trouble in Corinth centering around a challenge to Paul's apostleship. In the light of these circumstances, Paul wrote (1) to express gratitude for their response to Titus and to explain the harshness of the "severe letter" (chaps. 1-7); (2) to encourage the Corinthians to complete the collection before his next visit (8-9); and (3) to have the Corinthians prepare for his coming visit through a process of self-examination which, Paul thought, would distinguish the integrity of

his apostleship from that of his accusers—Jews from Palestine (10-13).

Harris is commendably cautious in maintaining the unity of the epistle. He carefully explains the arguments for and against the inclusion of each of four problem areas and concludes that 2:14-7:4 is a long digression; that 6:14-7:1 is an "ethical homily" of Paul's own composition; that the transition between chaps. 7 and 8 reflects a change in mood from exuberance over the past to embarrassment concerning the immediate future; and that the abrupt transition between 9:15 and 10:1 may reflect "a pause of dictation (E. Stange, W. Michaelis), coupled with the arrival of disturbing news" (p. 379).

The reviewer would have appreciated a more complete explanation of the author's position on 6:14-7:1. It is not demonstrated how the suggestion that Paul quotes from his own ethical homily resolves the difficulties of this passage—e. g., the six NT hapax legomena.

In rejecting the hypothesis that chaps. 10-13 are the "severe letter," Harris states that the "one incontestable feature" of the letter is the demand for the punishment of the offender (2:5, 6), which is not present in these chapters. However, this may not be as "incontestable" as it seems. After rightly rejecting the view that 2:5-11 refers to the incestuous man of 1 Cor 5, Harris makes no mention of the possibility that Paul is here speaking of himself. For Paul the most significant witness to his apostleship was his love and concern for his churches (11:7-12; 12:14-19; 13:10). He was aware that the "severe letter" had served its purpose but may have feared that its harshness had brought into question his love and hence his major credential as an apostle before the Corinthians. This is particularly important if chaps. 10-13 give us any clue to the situation that prompted the "severe letter." Therefore it was necessary for Paul to affirm his love for them (2:4). Writing in the third person Paul states that, in the light of his desire to help them, the fact that he has caused pain among them is punishment enough for him (2:5, 6). He asks forgiveness (2:7) and asks them to reaffirm their love for him (2:8). In this way the schism between them is breached and Satan is kept from gaining the advantage (2:9-11).

In spite of the abovementioned concerns, Harris' commentary was the highlight of the volume. He is familiar with contemporary trends in Pauline research (he provides an excellent bibliography), aware of the arguments against his positions and thorough in his exposition of the text.

The epistle to the Galatians was written from Ephesus in about A. D. 52. Did Paul write to the churches in northern or southern Galatia? Boice provides a good summary of both positions and settles on the southern-Galatia hypothesis. Although some of his arguments in support of this position are better than others, one does not seem to follow at all. Boice states that references to Barnabas (2:1, 9, 13) indicate that he must have been known to the Galatians. Since Barnabas only accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey through southern Galatia, the epistle must therefore be written to this area. Objectors

might point out that Paul mentions Barnabas without explanation in 1 Cor 9:6. To this Boice replies that Barnabas might have visited Corinth after being separated from Paul and thus would have been known to them. But this does not really answer the objection since Barnabas could also have visited northern Galatia after being separated from Paul.

Boice is of the opinion that Paul's opponents in Galatia were conservative Jewish teachers "who were legalizers from Jerusalem." Unfortunately, the reader is not let in on the process by which he comes to this conclusion. Several considerations bring this hypothesis into question: (1) the alternatives posed by modern scholarship: (a) Johannes Munck—the opponents were members of the Galatian congregation, and (b) Walter Schmithals—the opponents were syncretists who combined elements of Judaism with elements from their former religious practices; (2) the internal evidence of the epistle: (a) nowhere are the opponents called outsiders, no less Jews from Jerusalem, (b) Paul seems to have his gospel endorsed by the leaders of the Jerusalem congregation (2:9-10), and (c) the mention of "elemental spirits" (4:9) and the tendency of the Galatians to exhibit excesses of freedom are not characteristic of legalism. While these difficulties are not necessarily insurmountable, it would have been helpful for Boice to have dealt with them.

Paul wrote the epistle to respond to "three distinct charges made by his Jewish opponents" (p. 410). First, he is accused of being a false apostle and preaching a gospel not revealed from God. Paul responds to this charge by recalling the events of his life—that his teaching came directly from God and that his apostolic authority had been verified by the other apostles (1:11-2:21). The second charge against which Paul defends himself is that his gospel is not true. It is here that the theme of the epistle is announced most forcefully—that salvation comes by the grace of God through faith and not by the strict observance of the law (3:1-4:31). Finally, to the charge that the gospel he preached led to loose living, Paul answers that liberty need not lead to license (5:1-6:10). Rather, through the power of the Holy Spirit liberty can lead to "mature responsibility and holiness before God" (p. 486).

Not all would agree with Boice that 1:11-12 deals with the question of where Paul learned his teaching—"it was divine in origin" (p. 431). If so, how is this resolved with 1 Cor 11:23-26 or 15:3-4, which speak of Paul's reception of traditions that preceded him? It seems that this passage may be better understood as answering the question: From whom did Paul receive his authority? Again, not all will be satisfied with Boice's assertion that the conflict between Galatians 2 and Acts (two or three visits to Jerusalem) is resolved when one realizes that it was not Paul's intention "to give a full account of all his activities during the early years of his ministry" (p. 419).

Any commentary on the Pauline epistles that has as its primary

aim "to make clear the meaning of the text at the time and in the circumstances of its writing" must deal responsibly with at least three major trends in current Pauline scholarship: (1) Paul's use of a standardized Greek epistolary form; (2) Paul's use of traditional materials; and (3) Paul's eschatological framework. It is to these areas of major emphasis that the present volume makes little contribution.

We now know that Paul's epistles were not just "friendly letters" casually written. Rather, following the specific form of the Greek letter, Paul's epistles officially carried his apostolic power and thus the presence of the Lord into the community to which he wrote (cf. C. J. Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul*, pp. 17-28; W. Doty, "Classification of Epistolary Literature," *CBQ* 31 [1969] 183-199; and, by the same author, *Letters in Primitive Christianity*). In this regard, the reviewer would have appreciated a discussion of this epistolary form specifically related to the question of the destination of Romans (ch. 16) and the unity of 2 Corinthians. It should be mentioned that Boice notes the "usual elements" of Paul's introduction in Galatians and is aware that Paul omits the expression of praise that usually follows the greeting. Beyond these brief comments, the implications of this form for understanding Paul are largely ignored.

Paul's use of traditional materials has also not received adequate treatment. This is especially true of the commentary on Romans. Since Paul had not visited Rome, it would have been to his advantage to cite Christian traditions familiar to his readers. Harrison makes no mention of the body of research that sees Rom 3:24 ff. as pre-Pauline tradition (among others, this view is held by Bultmann, Käsemann, Bornkamm, Jeremias and Kümmel; cf. J. Reumann, "The Gospel of the Righteousness of God," *Int* 20 [1966] 432-452). In addition, the traditional nature of the ethical exhortations (paraenesis) in Rom 12:1-15:13 and Gal 5:1-6:10 receives no treatment as such. Many students of Pauline literature now believe that these practical exhortations reflect not the historical situation of a specific church (as Harrison and Boice maintain) but rather Christian tradition regarding baptism, the eucharist and practical living in the new age applicable for all churches (cf. P. Carrington, *Primitive Christian Catechism*; R. J. Karris, "Romans 14:1-15:13 and the Occasion of Romans," *CBQ* 35 [1973] 155-178).

Finally, it is the opinion of the reviewer that the volume reflects the tendency to read Paul from the perspective of the history of dogma (through the eyes of Luther and Augustine) and therefore minimizes the dominant factor in Pauline thought—the eschatological implications of the work of Christ—for an emphasis on justification by faith (substitutionary atonement). It was significant to the reviewer that the work of W. D. Davies, who carefully draws this distinction (*Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, pp. 221-223), was not mentioned in any of the bibliographies and only once in passing in the exposition. Paul's eschatological perspective is noticeably lacking in Mare's discussion of 1 Cor 15. Here the assertion is made that the resurrection of the believer is rooted

in the resurrection of Christ. The framework out of which Paul can make such an assertion, however, is not defined—namely, that in Christ the powers of the old age have been defeated and the age to come is present. In this light not all will agree with Mare's attempt to resolve the difficulties between this passage and Rev 20. This tendency is evidenced again in Romans and Galatians, where individual salvation is emphasized to the exclusion of the corporate nature of this Pauline theme. Thus, even though Harrison labels righteousness an "eschatological term" he uses it in a relational sense stressing divine provision for sins rather than the "dynamic" of God that defeats the evil powers and inaugurates the new age. Similarly both Harrison and Boice define justification as that which makes one right with God. No mention is made of Paul's understanding of this term as the release from the old age and entrance into the new, with all the ethical implications of this "conversion." None of this is to lessen the importance of the doctrine of justification by faith. All that is intended is to state that it is not necessarily as central to Paul's thought as his eschatology.

In conclusion, judged by its own standards—"to make clear the meaning of the text at the time and in the circumstances of its writing" and "to provide preachers, teachers, and students with a new and comprehensive commentary"—the present volume, with the exception of Second Corinthians, falls short. It is hoped that future evangelical efforts of this kind will exhibit a greater familiarity with current trends in Pauline scholarship and provide a more comprehensive dialogue with alternative points of view—all this so that the witness of the Word may fulfill its function among us.