

BOOK REVIEW

Moisés Silva, *Philippians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2nd edn, 2005). xix + 248 pp. Hdbk. US\$30.00.

Due to the response of the first edition, Moisés Silva has been given the opportunity to produce a second edition of his commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Philippians. This occasion presented Silva with a platform to respond to recent scholarly discussion about the book of Philippians over the past twenty years. In addition, Silva also used this opportunity to defend himself against some criticism, to challenge other interpretations and to propose some of his newer views about this epistle.

Silva opens his commentary by providing the reader with important background information about Pauline style. Silva believes that placing Philippians within its literary context and historical setting is vital to properly exegete the text. Also at this time, Silva introduces the reader to—what he understands to be—the key themes in Paul's corpus. Through this understanding of theme and content, Silva hopes to discern any variations in order to better understand the underlying themes within Philippians. In addition to this, the reader is introduced to important commentators and commentaries that have influenced the interpretation of Philippians. After laying this groundwork, Silva outlines his structural configuration of the epistle and the divisions used within the commentary.

Silva opens each section with a general introduction that summarizes the major issues and themes found within that section and outlines the internal structural makeup. Following this, Silva provides an interesting translation that attempts to explicitly express some of Paul's implied or suggested ideas. This interpretive translation provides the reader with an insight into future discussions and is an important feature in understanding Silva's viewpoint of the text.

The main body of the commentary is focused on the different theological ideas and themes within each passage. Silva attempts to provide background to the passage in order to prevent the exegete from reading too much into the text. In this section, Silva also highlights some of Paul's deviations in terms of structure and vocabulary, and attempts to provide a possible motivation and interpretation for these occurrences.

In developing his interpretation of the text, Silva draws on the Pauline corpus to shed light on exegetical issues. This provides a strong reference point for discussion and allows for Paul's other works to bring clarity to sometimes-ambiguous passages. Although this is a useful tool, Silva, would benefit by better incorporating the larger Hellenistic milieu and bringing different issues into conversation with Greek culture, specifically that of Asia Minor.

Each section ends with additional notes that were not incorporated within the larger commentary. This section evaluates some of the more technical issues of the exegesis, including text-critical and grammatical concerns. Silva separates these notes from the larger body because he does not want to bog down the commentary with secondary issues. However, there are occasions where the reading becomes disjunctive.

In addition to the commentary, an excursus is provided about the scribal tendencies in the Pauline epistles. Here, Silva attempts to discern the quality of the different codexes and their trustworthiness in commenting on different textual issues. Silva proposes that being aware of specific manuscript profiles can be very useful in properly evaluating a certain text's reliability.

One of the strengths of this commentary is Silva's ability to converse with a variety of different interpretive opinions. Although he might disagree with another scholar's ideas, Silva usually respects their opinion and is willing to concede that sometimes the evidence is ambiguous and that other scholars might be on the right track.

Silva, in his preface, states that he is very pleased at the number of pastors who found his first commentary useful for their understanding of *Philippians*. This pastoral focus has a number of strengths. First, it focuses clearly on understanding the text and the theological message within it. Secondly, a pastoral focus helps the author to be succinct and clear in communicating ideas. Thirdly, relevance and application are emphasized, with a promotion of the idea that the Bible is a living text that can speak to us today.

On the other hand, by focusing on the needs of the pastor, Silva gives less attention to other exegetical aspects. Although Silva does cover some textual issues and discusses different lexical topics within the additional notes section, there is a lack of coverage addressing linguistic concerns. Although not helpful for a person who is unfamiliar with Greek, there are a number of important tools that are valuable for understanding the focus and message of the text.

Overall, Moisés Silva's commentary on Philippians provides an excellent overview of the different theological themes imbedded within the text. This commentary is an excellent tool for a pastor or exegete who wishes to be exposed to a variety of different viewpoints regarding a passage and their relevance to today.

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