

BOOK REVIEW

Sheila E. McGinn (ed.), *Celebrating Romans: Template for Pauline Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004). xix + 276 pp. Hdbk. US\$36.00.

This book is a collection of essays in honor of Robert Jewett's dedication to the study of Romans, whose masterpiece was a commentary on Romans in the Hermeneia series, released in 2007. Under the subtitle 'Template for Pauline Theology', which is derived from J.D.G. Dunn's concept in *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998, p. 26), this book presents five approaches to Romans.

The first is a theological approach. In this category, three scholars (J.D.G. Dunn, Jeffrey B. Gibson and Graydon F. Snyder) contribute their views on theological motifs in Romans.

Dunn deals with the issue of 'covenant'. After examining the role and concept of covenant in the Pauline letters, he concludes that although covenant is not the central motif in Paul, it is not totally irrelevant to Paul's theology. According to Dunn, Paul's polemic was not 'over the fact of the covenant, nor that it was Israel's covenant, nor that it was open to Gentiles'. Rather, it was about 'its terms and timing, of how sonship to Abraham was determined and sustained, of how Moses functioned as a paradigm of ministry, and of how its eschatological promise would be implemented' (p. 19).

Gibson examines the dying formula 'X died/gave himself for Y' in secular Greek literature with respect to its context and concept, and applies it to Pauline passages such as Phil. 2.6-8. He concludes that for Paul, the dying formula was used in a context of polemic against 'the prevailing values of his day with respect to what ordinarily was thought to create personal and public "salvation" (σωτηρία)' (p. 39).

Snyder provides a historical overview of the theological issues related to Romans. He deals with sixteen issues of Christian history: faith and works, Christology, church and state, grace and the justice of

God, grace and free will, the power of the state, justification by faith, the historical purpose of Romans, Christ-mysticism, eschatology, Romans as a missionary document, universal toleration, the word of God, existence as eschatology, and the new perspective on Paul.

The second type of approach to Romans is rhetorical analysis. There are three contributors in this category as well: William S. Campbell, James D. Hester, and Wilhelm Wuellner.

Campbell re-evaluates the structure and content of Rom. 8.14–11.36, and insists, '[Rom.] 8:14–11:36 functions along with 14:1–15:13 to provide support for "the weak in faith" and to humble "the strong in faith"' (p. 72). Campbell regards Romans as a letter to Gentile believers, so that the major emphasis of the letter is 'to promote awareness of the Jewish roots of the new faith and to discourage a separatist Gentile-oriented breakaway group' (p. 77).

Hester examines the nature of Romans through a re-reading of Rom. 1.1-12. He argues that as an 'ambassadorial' letter, Romans was written to make Paul known to the Roman church, and to share his understanding of the gospel with the Roman Christians in order to secure their support for his future mission. According to Hester, Paul reveals these intentions at the beginning of his letter with various rhetorical devices.

Wuellner, believing that 'the values of text (including its implied or encoded reader) is [*sic*] determined by the context' (p. 139), suggests some methodological models for determining rhetorical context. In his application to Romans 1–6, by means of C. Perelman's model of the 'new rhetoric', he tries to identify various readers (assumed/implied reader, concrete and particular reader, and ideal reader), rhetorical context (audience context and representative context), and argumentative devices (theme, order, sequence, interaction, the technique of associative and dissociative arguments, etc.). Then, by using the theory of intentionality and action, he suggests some criteria for determining rhetorical context, such as modality (cognitional and volitional modality) and deictic markers (personal deixis, spatio-temporal deixis, intonation, quality, etc.).

The third way of reading Romans is by using a social-historical approach. Peter Lampe and Carolyn Osiek, provide a plausible social situation for the Roman church through the investigation of both Paul's (contemporary) writings and later literature.

The fourth approach is a feminist approach to Romans. After Sheila E. McGinn surveys feminist studies of Romans, Elsa Tamez deals with the concept of justification by faith from a feminist point of view. Then Pamela Thimmes re-reads the marriage and adultery analogy in Rom. 7.1-4.

The fifth category is reading Romans as a dialogue partner with a modern culture. In this category, Keith A. Burton and L.D. Hurst connect Romans with two modern movies, 'Regarding Henry' and 'Shane'. Lareta H. Finger mentions her experience of teaching Romans through simulating the situation of the Roman church. With the basic premise that the Roman church was a small house church, she allots to each student a role as a member of the Roman church, who listens to Paul's letter with other church members. According to her experience, reading Romans using role-modeling has provided a live understanding of Romans to each student.

This collection of essays has several merits. First, as a *Festschrift* it seems to reflect Robert Jewett's life-long interests well. He is interested not only in the exegesis of the text, but also in its relation to contemporary culture. Secondly, the attempt of this book to show various facets of interpreting Romans is outstanding. Instead of sticking to only one interpretive model, this book deals with five different approaches to an ancient sacred letter. Students can easily see that various readings are possible. The two survey articles are especially useful: Snyder's article on theological reading and McGinn's on the feminist approach. Moreover, Finger's article is very stimulating for teachers because her method and experience encourage a teacher to help students experience the reading of Romans as a live meeting with the apostle's mind, not only in a class situation, but also in a church context.

However, there is also an important weakness in this book. It fails to show the relationships among these five approaches. Even though this book provides various templates for reading Romans, it is not easy to attain an overall map of how to further analyze and interpret the epistle. Without any evaluations of the approaches or explanations of the relationships among them, the reader could be confused (cf. p. xix). Out of the five approaches, is any preferable for reading Romans? How is theological reading different from rhetorical reading or from the other approaches? What are the principles for a reader to follow when applying Romans today? The reader needs another 'template' for how to use

all these methods to make a holistic approach to Romans. But this book neither discusses such problems nor mentions them.

Overall, this book is useful in that it demonstrates the existence of various readings of Romans, but is less helpful in that it cannot provide an integrated template or map for approaching the epistle.

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