

BOOK REVIEW

Kuo-Wei Peng, *Hate the Evil, Hold Fast to the Good: Structuring Romans 12:1—15:13* (LNTS, 300; London: T&T Clark, 2006). x + 233 pp. Hbk. US\$140.00.

Peng's inaugural publication in this volume, based upon his doctoral dissertation done under the supervision of Andrew Lincoln and Barry Matlock at the University of Sheffield, attempts to provide a plausible structure for the paraenetic portion of Paul's letter to the Romans. The first chapter deals with methodological considerations and the subsequent chapters investigate structural issues in the text itself. I will use most of this review to evaluate the methodological part of the book since it provides the foundation for the analysis.

The chapter on method really amounts to a survey of several different methods that might offer some insight into the ways that texts are structured. The first is structuralism, which Peng dismisses for good reasons commonly cited by contemporary biblical scholars. He talks about three structuralist models: de Saussure's model, the Propp-Greimas model and Lévi-Strauss's anthropological model. However, de Saussure's work can hardly count as a model in the same sense that Greimas's model does. De Saussure, more appropriately, laid the essential linguistic foundations for structuralism rather than advocating a distinct structuralist methodology.

The second method Peng considers is discourse analysis. He divides discourse models into formalist (e.g. Louw and Nida), functionalist (e.g. Green, Cottrell, and Turner) and synthetic methods (Reed), which does not appear to me to be an entirely helpful classification since all of the scholars he mentions would probably want to emphasize both contextual and contextual features of a text. And technically, Reed thoroughly applies a Hallidayan *functional* paradigm in the development of his model, constantly highlighting the connection between form and function. Having swiftly surveyed the terrain of discourse studies, Peng seems almost as quick to dismiss discourse analysis as a comprehensive

methodology as he was to jettison structuralism. He has a number of criticisms, most of which appear to me to be based on misunderstandings. For example, he says that discourse analysis is not as ‘comprehensive’ (p. 23) as its practitioners believe, since it cannot deal with certain phenomena such as sound repetition in Rom. 12.10-13. This criticism underestimates the scope of work being done by linguists working both outside of and within biblical studies, however. Michael Hoey, a European corpus linguist, has done great a deal along these lines and Cynthia Westfall has applied many of his insights to all types of repetition in the Greek New Testament, including cognate and various forms of word repetition, in the development of her discourse analytic method for investigating the structure of Hebrews. He also criticizes discourse analysts on the basis that critical interpretive ‘judgments are not always rule-governed’ (pp. 23-24). Agreed. But this could be said of nearly any method and its criteria. The implicit criticism, which Peng later makes explicit, is that discourse analysis is reductionistic. But again, I think that this misunderstands the method—or, at least, that it is not a fair generalization to make concerning all forms of discourse analysis. No New Testament scholar working in linguistics that I am familiar with would claim that discourse analysis is a mechanistic process that produces correct interpretations. The claim is simply that the method provides a window into the formal features of the text thereby supplying a more objective *framework* for making critical judgments and discussing them. The framework is meant to guide interpretation, not produce it. All this to say: his treatment of discourse analysis is, at least to me, quite unconvincing.

Rhetorical criticism is Peng’s next candidate for analyzing the structure of Rom. 12.1—15.13. In his section on this method, a number of now fairly standard objections to ancient rhetorical criticism are raised, although the most sustained and substantial critique of Paul’s use of ancient rhetorical theory by R. Dean Anderson is surprisingly absent from the discussion. Peng nevertheless does see the value of ancient rhetorical arrangement and style for assessing the structure of the paraenesis in Romans, while the idea of rhetorical species seems to him to be less helpful in this respect. But some of the very objections to rhetorical criticism by Porter and Reed that he endorses would seem to preclude the use of, at least, rhetorical arrangement on any formal description of the concept. Peng, it seems, attempts to partially anticipate this objection with a discussion of a passage from Quintilian suggesting

that precise rhetorical arrangement may not always be followed or that parts of a speech may be excluded at the discretion of the speaker. However, if Peng buys the generic distinction between epistolary and rhetorical categories in the ancient world as he claims, then there is still no theoretical justification (to use Porter's terminology) for applying *rhetorical* categories to Pauline *epistolary* literature, even if we allow for some flexibility in the arrangement of ancient speeches—which, if pressed too far, results in explanatorily unhelpful analysis.

Finally, Peng surveys the eclectic approaches of Jewett and Hellholm in their analysis of Romans, before briefly outlining his own eclectic approach. He compares his method to 'putting together a jigsaw puzzle without the finished picture' (p. 42) that attempts to embody top-down and bottom-up approaches to discourse through an 'interactive' method where some features are analyzed from the top down and others from the bottom up, although no description of which features are considered global and which ones are considered local is given. The puzzle analogy frames the development of his method in terms of three points: (1) the assumption of the unity of the text, (2) the lack of a standard procedure for putting together a puzzle so that many approaches (i.e. methods) may be equally legitimate and (3) the way analysis is preformed by drawing from one's 'preconception pool', the ability to identify clues based upon one's background knowledge: 'this "preconception pool", then, is where insights from structural exegesis, discourse analysis and rhetorical criticism may come into play' (p. 43).

His analysis begins with Rom. 12.9-21 rather than Rom. 12.1. Regarding this decision, he says, 'by no means does this imply that this entry point is absolutely superior to others or that this is the only way to deal with our text'. Instead, he insists, 'this choice is no more than the personal judgment of the analyst' (p. 43). However, the fact that texts are produced and organized linearly (a linguistic phenomena known as linearization) suggests that such a choice is not arbitrary and this decision seems to pre-judge the issue of structure before the analysis is ever undertaken.

In Chapter Two, where Peng considers the structure of Rom. 12.9-21, a number of possible structures are considered and rejected, including especially the proposals of Stuhlmacher, Talbert and Wilson. Peng mentions the linguistic phenomena of thematization and staging, but never returns to using the categories—the reader is left wondering why they were introduced. Peng then examines at some length Black's

proposed structure based on stylistic features and discourse analysis and insists that the attendant problems with Black's analysis warrant alteration according to the principles of rhetorical style found among the ancient handbooks. According to Peng, the passage is primarily structured according to the series of antitheses within the section. The antithesis that is created is between good and evil, supporting a further a tension between an in-group and out-group.

The third chapter also begins by dismissing three recent structural outlines for Rom. 13.1-7 put forward by Stein, Porter and Merklein. Since each of these authors identifies a pattern of argumentation within Rom. 13.1-7, Peng turns to ancient and modern rhetorical discussions of argumentation. To begin with, one wonders whether ancient and modern rhetorical methods can or should be intertwined. Second, the treatment appears haphazard in that it introduces a new method (modern rhetoric, even though this was anticipated in the methodological chapter) and analyzes the structure of Rom. 13.1-7 from the standpoint of an entirely different methodological framework than the one used in the analysis of Rom. 12.9-21. Why is the first passage analyzed according to the conventions of ancient rhetorical style and the second according to the conventions of argumentation? Is Rom. 12.9-21 less of an argument than Rom. 13.1-7? Does Rom. 13.1-7 not employ stylistic patterns to support its structure?

Chapter Four provides an attempt to bring the two units together in a comprehensive investigation of Rom. 12.9—13.10. The argument of the first section of the chapter is that the themes that unite these two units are the binary pairs 'good' and 'evil' coupled with a focus on 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. But the pairing of these as structural/thematic devices is odd since one pair represents a set of themes and another refers to participant relations. The agenda in the second portion of the chapter is to establish 13.8-10 as the conclusion of this two-subunit section by illustrating the appearance of good/evil and insider/outsider motifs in the passage.

Romans 12:1—13:14 is considered in Chapter Five, attempting to integrate the proposed structural scheme with Chapters Twelve and Thirteen as a whole. First, rhetorical stylistic issues are considered in examining the structure of Rom. 12.3-8. Then Rom. 12.1-2 is analyzed according to its 'stylistic arrangement' (p. 122), by which Peng seems to mean ancient rhetorical style. He then turns to more syntactic considerations in arguing for the unity of Rom. 12.1-8, suggesting that the

passage is organized according to prohibition–exhortation and lexical-semantic issues such as the repetition of words from the same semantic domain. Similar criteria are employed for detecting structure across the entire proposed unit (12.1—13.14) as well.

The sixth chapter, which treats Rom. 14.1—15.13, resumes the previous layout of analyzing recent research on the structure of the passage in order to pave the way for the author’s proposal. In his treatment of Rom. 14.2-13a, Peng utilizes yet another piece of ancient rhetorical theory when he suggests 14.2-6 functions as a *narratio*, but apparently fails to realize that such a classification describes a macro-structural part of a speech not a micro-structural part of a subsection in a letter. The broader analysis of Rom. 14.1—15.13 is characterized by assessment of the argument, primarily using ancient and rhetorical methods.

Having plotted out the structures for Rom. 12.1—13.14 and 14.1—15.13, Peng attempts a synthesis of the entire section in Chapter Seven. Methodologically, his approach essentially involves demonstrating lexical and conceptual connections between the two major portions of the letter, according to his analysis (chaps. 12–13 and 14–15).

The conclusion offers a ‘Meta-Comment’ on issues of ‘Structure and Method’, seeking to show how the three methods chosen ‘contribute to illuminating the structure of our text’ (p. 199). According to Peng, structural exegesis created a sensitivity to various oppositions, discourse analysis provided a basis for understanding cohesive relations between sections and rhetorical criticism helped especially with stylistic issues.

This monograph makes at least three important contributions. First, it provides a structural analysis of a number of individual passages in Romans chapters 12–15 from diverse methodological perspectives, some of which at the individual level are quite convincing. Second, it conveniently collects and analyzes recent work on the structure of this important and hard-to-pin-down passage with consistently incisive observations. Third, Peng’s numerous insightful critiques of previous research clear the ground for a new more persuasive proposal for the structure of Rom. 12.1—15.13, though I am not convinced that Peng’s analysis is able to provide us with such a persuasive proposal, at least not of the macro-structure of the passage.

The reason that Peng’s treatment is only most convincing when it is dealing with small sections of text is because his methodological

procedure is not applied monolithically throughout the entire passage under investigation (Rom. 12.1—15.13). One section is treated with one method, another section is explored according to different considerations, the next is treated by an entirely different approach and so on. It is difficult, from my perspective, to accept a proposed structural unity for Rom. 12.1—15.13 that is not clearly supported by a unified methodological framework, applied consistently and rigorously across the entire text. How can one detect textual unity and structure with a method that has very little apparent unity and structure itself? On the more technical side of things, a rather substantial typo appears on the cover and title page of the book, which reads ‘Structuring Romans 12.1—15.1’ in the subtitle instead of ‘Structuring Romans 12.1—15.13’.

These shortcomings notwithstanding, *Hate the Evil, Hold Fast to the Good* will prove to be an important resource for scholars interested in interpretive method in general and the paraenetic portion of Romans in particular, even if all are not convinced by its conclusions.

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