

BOOK REVIEW

Stanley E. Porter (ed.), *Paul: Jew, Greek, and Roman* (PAST, 5; Leiden: Brill, 2008). xiii + 370 pp. Hbk. US\$184.00.

Paul: Jew, Greek, and Roman, edited by Stanley Porter, is a scholarly approach to the apostle Paul through three ethnic lenses, as the title of the book suggests. The source materials utilized are primarily the Pauline letters, but also the book of Acts. Porter points out that Paul's Jewish identity is generally unquestioned. In terms of Paul being a Greek and a Roman, Porter admits that here it is more difficult to prove. Porter notes that Paul's origins in Tarsus are not to be 'seriously disputed' (p. 3) as Paul claims after his calling he went to Arabia and Damascus rather than Jerusalem (Gal. 1.17). Paul's Greek side is readily seen in the fact that he wrote his letters either himself or through a scribe in Greek, and he usually cited Scripture from the Septuagint.

In the first essay, Drake Williams investigates Paul's use of Scripture in 1 Corinthians. Williams contends that the Jewish influence on Paul can be seen particularly in his citations and allusions to Jewish Scripture. Williams counts eighteen such instances.

In the second essay, Panayotis Coutsoumpos investigates Paul's attitude toward the law, which Coutsoumpos identifies as 'the Jewish law' (p. 39). The subject of the New Perspective on Paul is also examined. Coutsoumpos urges caution regarding the views particularly of E.P. Sanders, as he finds that Sanders does not fully and comprehensively deal with Paul's position in regards to his rejection of the law. Coutsoumpos states that it is reasonable to assume that Paul is not attacking those who think that salvation derives from keeping the law, but those who are insistent on retaining aspects of the law that separate Jews from Gentiles. Against Coutsoumpos is that fact that Paul does appear to attack the position that one can be justified forensically before God by keeping the law. Paul argues one is justified by faith in

Christ (Gal. 2.16). Coutsoumpos does make the valid point that Paul never converted from one religion to another.

In the third essay, Bas Van Os investigates the subject of the Jewish recipients of Galatians. Van Os begins his essay by examining three areas: first, whether the letter addresses only uncircumcised Gentiles, secondly, the issue of Gentile worship of other gods, and thirdly, the issue of whether Paul's opponents required circumcision of the Gentiles. Van Os contends the 'uncircumcised' mentioned in Galatians refers to Gentiles, but in addition, it may also refer to uncircumcised Diaspora Jews and uncircumcised Jewish children. Van Os refers to Malina and Pilch, who claim that most Diaspora Jews did not practice circumcision. Van Os admits that he does not find much evidence for this, but he refers to *Jub.* 15.33-34 and 1 Macc. 1.11-15 as evidence that many Hellenized Jews did not practice circumcision, and that some tried to undo it. Van Os thus argues that this may suggest evidence that Diaspora Jews in Paul's day did not practice circumcision. In the case of the Maccabean text, the context is clearly that of an attempt by Antiochus Epiphanes IV to force assimilation by making Jews abandon their religious customs and conform to Hellenistic ways. The text of *Jubilees*, on the other hand, addresses the issue of apostate Jews who refused to follow the covenant of circumcision, and this implies that some Jews neglected to practice circumcision. However, to associate the situation and circumstances of *Jubilees* with Paul's letter to the Galatians appears speculative. Van Os sees the Gentile worship described in Galatians as either referring to worship of the powers or possibly of angelic rulers. On the issue of whether Paul's opponents required circumcision of non-Jews, van Os advances the argument that the main opposition to Paul was due to his refusal to permit Jews to be circumcised. Van Os is of the conviction that Paul had a mixed audience (Jews and Gentiles) in view in Galatians, and that his concern was over the issue of whether Jewish Christians should observe the law, and the effects it would have on the Gentile mission.

In the fourth essay, Andrew Pitts examines the subject of unity and diversity in Paul's eschatology. Pitts observes the trend in Pauline studies to see a significant amount of diversity between Paul's earlier and later letters. Pitts attributes the diversity to a rhetorical category, based on the situational settings that Paul was either treating or addressing. Notwithstanding this diversity, Pitts argues that a structural unity is retrievable. Pitts then proceeds to canvass the various

trends in Pauline eschatology, and reviews and assesses a number of scholars who have written on the subject. Some of the subjects covered by Pitts in regards to unity and diversity in Pauline eschatology involve the *parousia*, the intermediate state and the resurrection body. Pitts also deals with the question of whether Paul's eschatology evolved and developed from a Jewish to a Hellenistic structure. In Pitts's treatment of 1 Thessalonians, where Paul addresses the status of the Christian dead in relation to the living, there appears to be some confusion. First, Pitts argues that in 1 Thess. 4.13 (a possible typo) the Christian dead will not 'precede' or 'go before' those who are alive at the *parousia*. The text that treats this is actually 1 Thess. 4.15, not 4.13. Secondly, Paul is not arguing that those who have fallen asleep in Christ will not 'precede' or 'go before' the living at the *parousia*, rather, Paul is saying quite the opposite: it is those who are alive at the *parousia* who will not precede or go before the Christian dead, since the dead will rise first (*prōtos*, 1 Thess. 4.16). Pitts summarizes this chapter by showing that Paul evidences a consistent eschatological framework, which points to a general structural unity.

In the fifth essay, Timothy Carter examines the metaphor of Christ's body in 1 Corinthians 12. Carter examines the use of this metaphor in two ways. Does it refer to the notion of the body of Christ as a metaphor for the church, or does it function as an ontological description of the church as the earthly body of the risen Christ? Carter seems to suggest both are correct. He focuses primarily on the latter. Carter argues from Paul's Greco-Roman social world that the language Paul employs regarding various body parts and their functions accords well with the physiology used in Paul's Hellenistic world. Carter also highlights the effective power behind the body metaphor for the church to show that as a result of the metaphor, Paul is subverting social distinctions within the faith community. Moreover, Paul is calling for the protection of, and the rendering of honor to, the parts of the body deemed less useful or unseemly.

In the next essay, Craig Evans examines the various quotations from, allusions to, and parallels of Paul's letters with, pagan writings. While the Jewish Scriptures serve as Paul's primary source material, Paul secondarily uses pagan writings, according to Evans. Evans provides more than two hundred parallels from Paul's letters and his sermons recorded in Acts with pagan literature by way of formal quotations, allusions, and parallels. According to Evans, Paul is the first Christian

writer to have established an engagement with the materials of the Greco-Roman world by way of their philosophers and ethicists. This practice continued through the apostolic Fathers and apologists, thereby setting a precedent followed by the church's major theologians.

The following essay by James Harrison investigates Paul's understanding of leadership in the house churches he founded in the social context of the eastern Mediterranean. Harrison explores pastoral leadership in Paul through the lens of the Greek gymnasium, which functioned as the primary venue for education. Historians have been able to understand this aspect of first-century education primarily through inscriptions of the gymnasiarchs, which would probably be known to Paul. Harrison suggests Paul used and adapted this form of education for his house churches in terms of pastoral and social values. An example is the granting of coronal awards to athletes. Harrison argues that Paul takes this practice and applies it to the believers' crowning at the *eschaton*.

In the eighth essay, Mark Nanos challenges the scholarly consensus regarding the 'weak' in 1 Corinthians 8. Instead of identifying the 'weak' with younger or novice Christian believers (the traditional interpretation), Nanos proposes that they are actually polytheists for whom Christ died. Nanos asserts that the scholarly consensus in this case is 'likely mistaken' (p. 179). In addition, Nanos proposes that the 'weak' are not only unbelievers, but also brothers and sisters to Christian believers. The difficulty in Nanos's reasoning is that Paul is very restrictive of those for whom Christ died, as he always speaks of the beneficiaries as those who are 'in Christ'. Paul identifies himself with believers in the 'us' passages where Christ is said to have died for the believers (e.g. Rom. 5.8). Paul is no universalist. He clearly envisions only Christian believers as benefiting from and partaking of salvation, and this view seems to be predicated on Paul's strong view of divine election (Rom. 9–11; Eph. 1.3–14). Nanos reasons that Paul had a sense of a 'fictive kinship with all humanity' (p. 209), as those for whom Christ died, and thus all humanity could be brothers and sisters to Christian believers. Paul, however, is consistent throughout his letters in applying the language of sibling relationship only to Christian believers. Nanos's interpretation of the 'weak' in 1 Corinthians 8 is certainly a new approach to the traditional interpretation, but in this case, the traditional view still appears to be the more sound.

In the ninth essay, Craig Keener examines the Pauline categories of flesh or 'fleshly' versus Spirit in Rom. 8.5-8. Keener argues that Paul's use of these terms corresponds to one's frame of mind, so that Paul is presenting a frame of mind involving the flesh and a frame of mind involving the Spirit. The former involves a perspective or a habitual way of thinking that is dominated by worldly and human concerns, and focuses on one's bodily existence. This lifestyle, according to Keener, is incapable of fulfilling the righteous purposes of God and his law. The struggle of the mind frame is depicted by Paul in Rom. 7.15-24. The frame of mind involving the Spirit involves a righteous mental lifestyle, in which the presence of the Spirit makes a contrasting difference with that of the frame of mind of the flesh. The Spirit in this case brings about life and peace, especially in regards to one's relationship with God, but also reciprocally with fellow believers.

In the tenth essay, Joshua Jipp examines Rom. 7.7-25, a text that has been interpreted, especially by the Reformers, as referring to Paul's self struggle with the righteous demands of the law, and his inability to meet them. Jipp takes this Pauline text and studies it in comparison with Plato's *Republic*, by examining in particular the subject of educating the divided soul as Paul sees it, with a parallel analysis by Plato. Jipp is convinced that Rom. 7.7-25 should be viewed within the context of Platonic assumptions and images of the divided soul. In this Platonic view, the reasoning part of the soul is defeated by the passions and appetites of desire. Jipp sees Paul appropriating these Platonic motifs in his letter. However, while Paul borrows these Platonic motifs, he also overturns some of them, such as the Platonic view of education in contrast to the Jewish tradition, which saw the passions of the body as kept in check by education and the law of God. Jipp argues that the most important component of his essay is showing that while Paul appropriates a popular discourse by Plato, he does so in order to counter his Jewish Christian opponents who continue to slander Paul's law-free gospel. According to Jipp, Paul shows on the other hand that because the law is impotent to produce obedience, obedience can only be realized by the Spirit.

In the next essay, Trevor Burke addresses the idea of *huiiothesia*, or adoption as sons, as the missing piece in Pauline soteriology, and a neglected one compared to justification, redemption and reconciliation. The term *huiiothesia* appears in the New Testament only in the Pauline corpus. Burke sees Paul's understanding of *huiiothesia* as an important

one in his soteriology. Burke asserts that adoption is a salvific work of ‘the divine Family—Father, Son and Holy Spirit’ (pp. 259-60; cf. 267, 286), thus giving it a Trinitarian framework. Burke investigates the idea of adoption as a metaphor in the Roman context, especially the Roman family in antiquity. He develops the notion of adoption as an act of God, whereby God takes a paternal initiative as *paterfamilias* of the redeemed faith community. Adoption communicates the notion of a new name, new status, and an inheritance as an heir of the family. The familial dimension is highlighted by the giving of the Spirit who elicits the cry of *Abba* Father (Gal. 4.6).

In the following essay, Stanley Porter raises the interesting question of whether or not Paul spoke Latin. Porter rightly notes that very little has been dedicated to this question in scholarship. That Paul knew and spoke Greek and Hebrew/Aramaic, seems to be undisputed in scholarship. Porter refers to passages in Acts where Paul is said to hear or use Hebrew or Aramaic. It is interesting that in the commissioning of Saul/Paul, the risen Jesus addresses him by the Semitic form of his name (mostly elsewhere in Acts, the Greek *Saulos*) by calling him *Saoul* (Acts 9.4; cf. 22.7). Porter principally sees Paul’s contact with Rome as a prime indicator that Paul at least would have heard Latin spoken. However Porter points out that the *lingua franca* even in Rome would have been Greek. Porter sees Illyricum, one of the Latin-speaking provinces of the Roman Empire, as a possible area where Paul would have been exposed to the use of Latin. Porter also investigates possible Latinisms in Paul’s language, although he admits they are indirect. Earlier scholarship, Porter notes, raised the question of Paul’s acquaintance with and possible knowledge of Latin, but very few contemporary scholars care to venture into that area. Part of the problem, as Porter notes, is the lack of direct evidence. Nonetheless, Porter is still of the conviction that there is circumstantial evidence that Paul may have known Latin, although ‘the evidence is far from convincing’ (p. 308).

Sean Adams closes the book by examining Paul as a Roman citizen, and what Roman citizenship in the ancient world entailed. Adams looks particularly at Acts 22.22-29 where Paul makes a claim to Roman citizenship. Paul says nothing of Roman citizenship in his letters, and the only recourse one has, according to Adams, is to Luke’s record in Acts, which sees Paul as both a Roman citizen and a Hellenistic Jew from Tarsus. Adams begins first by investigating the subject of the

nature and development of Roman citizenship in the ancient world, and the rights and privileges associated with it. He also treats the dangerous ramifications for false claimants to Roman citizenship. In addressing the question of Paul's citizenship, Adams raises the well known question of the historical veracity of Acts. Some see Paul's claim to Roman citizenship as a Lukan invention to make Gentiles receptive to Paul. Adams sees no need for this suspicion regarding Acts, and sees some of this scholarly reaction to Acts as based on arguments from silence. As a result, Adams sees a rejection of Paul's Roman citizenship as a hasty dismissal on the part of some scholars, and Adams has renewed the call for a more in-depth application and study of this particular part of Paul's persona.

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