

Porter, S E & Evans, C A (eds) 1995 — The Pauline Writings (A Sheffield Reader)

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This volume is one of a series comprising a collection of articles on specific topics, selected from the first fifty issues of the *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, founded in 1978. This explains why the original publication dates of the articles in this volume range from 1980 to 1992. This fact may create the impression that at least some of the articles may be somewhat dated already. They were, however, chosen by the editors in the belief that the articles 'make significant contributions in several different ways'. This claim is not unfounded, because although all of these articles must already have been taken note of by the scholarly world in one way or another, most of them are still of importance in Pauline studies.

In this volume the different articles have been classified into four main categories in accordance with the topics addressed by each of them, as follows (the titles are not given in full):

- * *Paul the apostle*: Paul's apostolic authority (E Best); Paul and the Pharisaic tradition (D Lührmann); Acts and the Pauline corpus (W O Walker).
- * *Pauline interpretation of sacred tradition*: Typology and correspondence in Romans 9-11 (J W Aageson); The midrash in 2 Corinthians 3 (A T Hanson); Midrash and paraenesis in 1 Corinthians 10:1-22 (W A Meeks); The tenth commandment in Romans 7:7-25 (J A Ziesler).
- * *Pauline theology*: Paul and the law (K Snodgrass); The righteousness of God in Romans 3:25-26 (J Piper); Eschatological development in Paul (C L Mearns); Apocalyptic visions and the exaltation of Christ in Colossians (C Rowland).
- * *Pauline letter-form and rhetoric*: Hellenistic letter-forms and the structure of Philippians (L Alexander); Mirror-reading Galatians (J M G Barclay); The Pastorals and the ethics of reading (F Young).

Though a lack of space does not allow for even a concise summary of each article in this review, it may be worthwhile to take note of a few of the more interesting conclusions made. Paul definitely claimed to be an apostle and he exercised authority. However, he did not employ the term 'apostle' when he was concerned with his converts, but only when he was concerned with his relations with other church leaders (Best). The notion of righteousness in Paul is more easily traced in the *Psalms of Solomon* than in the other literature of Pharisaic origin (Lührmann). Luke knew at least some of Paul's letters. The Pauline theology as reflected in the letters is, however, not to be found in the portrayal of Paul's message but, for the sake of Paul, in the portrayal of Peter's message, thus making it impossible for people to reject Paul

on account of his doctrine of justification through faith (Walker). Instead of typology, we should rather speak of correspondence in Paul. He interpreted the Christ event by referring to the persons or events in the past (Old Testament) that, in his view, 'corresponded' to what came to pass in Christ (Aageson). He whom Moses saw in the tabernacle (as narrated in Exodus 34) was, according to Paul (2 Cor 3:7-18) the pre-existent Christ, and the reason for the veil on Moses' face was to prevent the messianic glory of the pre-existent Christ from being seen by the Israelites (Hanson). The exegetical problems pertaining to Romans 7:7-25, and especially 7:14(13)-25, can best be solved if we assume that the 'law' that is in question here, is the tenth commandment. It explains why Paul is saying that one cannot obey the law *at all*, a highly improbable claim. This claim is, however, understandable if the real point at issue is the control of one's desires, which can not be accomplished by the law (Ziesler). The best possible explanation for Paul's oscillating, sometimes contradictory, statements about the law is to be found in his participationist language based on the concept of 'spheres of influence' or 'power fields'. The negative statements describe the usurped law in the sphere of sin, flesh, and death. The positive statements describe the law in its proper sphere of faith, Spirit, and Christ (Snodgrass). It is unacceptable to assume that the righteousness of God in Romans 3:25-26 consists most basically in God's saving 'covenant faithfulness' (*iustitia salutifera*). The key which unlocks the interpretation of this text is provided by the concept of God's righteousness as his absolute faithfulness to act for the sake of his name and his glory. God has accomplished a twofold purpose in sending Christ: he has manifested and preserved his own righteousness and yet has justified the ungodly merely through faith (Piper). Paul initially subscribed to the earliest Christian belief that the general resurrection was largely accomplished already through adult believers' conversion-baptism. Later on he came to emphasize apocalyptic eschatology to the neglect of realized eschatology in order to: (a) include deceased Christians in the hope; (b) counter the arrogance of enthusiasm; (c) adjust to bodily weakness, infirmities, and sufferings; (d) strengthen Christians against a possible impending crisis of persecution (Mearns).

As was already indicated above, and as can be deduced from the short presentation of the findings of some of the articles in this volume, this will definitely be a handy piece of literature to have on one's bookshelf when studying Paul. Most of the articles can be regarded as meaningful contributions towards a better understanding of Paul. They have already stimulated Pauline studies in particular and generally, and are still going to in future. They are of a high scholarly standard and are particularly readable. One would naturally not agree with all of them or with everything said, but most of them are thought-provoking, to say the least. For these reasons, and for the benefit of having such a number of excellent contributions available in one volume, the volume is to be highly recommended.
