Not only does the author to a certain degree succeed in bridging the traditional schism between the evangelicals and ecumenicals, but between the inner and outer realms of existence as well. In his own words: ‘The, “outward” threats correspond with the “inward” fatigue and restlessness’. This point coincides with the defining of stress as the inner side of the ecological crisis; of stress and the ecological crisis as individual and collective pathology of discrepancy of the inside and the outside, as presented in the reviewer’s dissertation in 1985.

The author’s discussion of the concept of *numbing* is particularly noteworthy. Numbing refers to the human response of the ‘killing of feelings’ (Robert Jay Lifton) as a survival mechanism. The only way to overcome the pain of others is to make oneself *insensitive* to the onslaught of painful images, to reduce the range of feeling, to go numb. The author, however, proffers forgiveness as an alternative response. Chapter 20 deals most satisfactorily with this issue.

A highly recommended book for all who seek a fresh interpretation and application of pneumatology today, especially in South Africa. *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)* of the government and all its hearings could be understood and evaluated against this background.

Peterlin, D 1995 — Paul’s letter to the Philippians in the light of Disunity in the Church (Supplements to Novum Testamentum LXXIX.)


Reviewer: Dr P B Boshoff

Epaphroditus was an influential and well-to-do person who played a leading role in the Philippian church (204). He undertook a visit to Paul in prison in order to hand over the congregation’s modest financial contribution on the occasion (180-181, 184). He covered the costs of his journey and lodgings himself, and undertook to see to Paul’s further needs. Epaphroditus was Paul’s *leitourgos* in terms of providing money. When Epaphroditus fell ill in Rome he feared that the small number of Christians in Philippi may interpret his illness as affirmation of the unsuccessful nature of his mission. Paul’s imprisonment had already evoked serious doubts, as the Philippians battled to reconcile themselves with his situation. How could the Lord allow his legate to be subjected to such an ordeal and his work to be subsequently handicapped. Coming from a context of paganism they anticipated Christian life to be much more glamorous, and battled to reconcile suffering with it. ‘Was he doing his best to proclaim the gospel? Wasn’t he compromising Christ by being thrown into jail? Isn’t the Christian life all about victorious living?’ (48). Suffering became a burning question as they — as congregation — were increasingly socially ostracized (50-51, 219).

Peterlin proposes that Paul doesn’t react so much to dissenting theological viewpoints. He does not regard theological opponents as the real danger, but rather a potential threat from outside the congregation. The letter is not intended for those representing the threat. They don’t read the letter themselves, but are indicated by Paul as a bad example, not to be followed. He fears that certain tendencies within
the congregation could cause the 'opponents' to get an active influence over the Philippians. Peterlin admits that there are perfectionistic tendencies among some Philippian Christians, but this is not a detailed theological position against which Paul would have reacted (99, 219).

Peterlin comes to the conclusion that divisional tension is behind the words of the Philippian letter. Paul's anxiety about the unity becomes obvious in the opening remark when he addresses 'all'. He pin-points the problem in 4:2 when he admonishes Euodia and Syntyche, the two female deacons, to be like-minded. They were among the earliest converts and leaders of house-congregations in Philippi. 'As leaders and patrons they would easily muster the support of their subordinates and sway them in their direction resulting in the estrangement of whole house-congregations' (127).

Paul doesn't choose sides between the groups, he just wants to win over those who are against him (227). The discordance is about Paul himself (75), to such an extend that some withhold financial support from him (203). The struggle that ensues causes the congregation to split leadership around Euodia and Syntyche. One group still supports Paul, while the other feels that he, because of his imprisonment, no longer deserves their co-operation (221). An unedifying struggle for power develops.

Paul, having been informed by Epaphroditus, writes his letter to the Philippians against this background. Keeping the discord in mind right through, his aim is to quide the Philippians toward reconciliation.

This book, in attempting to provide answers to historic questions, offers good reading to the historic-critical reader of the New Testament. However, I sincerely doubt whether the view that the Philippian letter consists of one letter only, will really convince. The understating of any profound theological motive in Paul's writing will also remain a problem. Interesting though, is the light that is shed on Epaphroditus, and the nature of his involvement in arguments. Overall impression: A book to be read.

Davies, M 1993 — Matthew (Readings: A new Biblical commentary)

Sheffield: JSOT Press. Price: US $50.00

Reviewer: Prof H J Bernard Combrink

This commentary, as well the one on the Gospel of John by MWG Stibbe in the same series, is really ground-breaking in its consistent implementation of reader response criticism in a commentary. In the introduction Davies gives a very clear exposition of what such an approach entails. She underlines the fact that every reader's unique background and reading experience plays a role in the reading of a text. As readers furthermore belong to interpretive communities, the author lays her own cards on the table as a British female academic, member of the Anglican church, member of the Labour Party, et cetera. Utilizing insights of W Iser she draws attention to the fact that texts themselves are indeterminate although the text prestructures the response of the implied reader. She also discusses the rhetorical strategies used by Matthew to determine its readers' response. On page 29 the author gives an outline of the implied reader of the Gospel of Matthew as created in this manner. Through the selection and actualisation by real readers the text is then made determinate. Nevertheless, the commentator tries to