

1998

Review: The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians and The Theology of the Shorter Pauline Letters

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Recommended Citation

Luter, A. Boyd, "Review: The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians and The Theology of the Shorter Pauline Letters" (1998). *Faculty Publications and Presentations*. Paper 264.
http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lts_fac_pubs/264

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The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians. By J. D. G. Dunn. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993, xviii + 161 pp., paper n.p. *The Theology of the Shorter Pauline Letters.* By K. P. Donfried and I. H. Marshall. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993, xii + 208 pp., paper n.p.

Both volumes are part of Cambridge University Press' ambitious New Testament Theology series, which is edited by Dunn. However, as with many such creative ventures, the contributions are of uneven quality and vastly dissimilar writing styles.

In the case of these two works, it is completely reasonable for the theological contours of Galatians and Philippians to be treated independently. However, it is not nearly so clear why Colossians and Philemon would be fully detached, given their considerable background linkage. Nor will many evangelicals be convinced by Donfried's reason for a separate handling of the theology of 1 and 2 Thessalonians (see below).

Though I do not endorse every point of Dunn's treatment of Galatians, it is the stronger of the two works under review. His material is not only highly readable but also thorough and yet surprisingly succinct. This slender treatment pulls together the essential features of his encyclopedic understanding quite admirably.

Donfried dates 1 Thessalonians between AD 41 and 44, choosing speculatively to place the letter in the long period of silence in Paul's earlier ministry instead of following the chronology laid out in Acts. He also sees it as reflective of a more harmonious "early Paul" while Galatians and Romans supposedly reflect a polemical "late Paul." His discussion of the theology of 1 Thessalonians, as organized around the concept of election, is worthy of thoughtful consideration but is hardly the last word.

For dubious reasons, like "an unusual dependence on and imitation of 1 Thessalonians" (p. 85), Donfried believes that 2 Thessalonians is "Pauline" but not written by Paul. His best guess is Timothy. Donfried does stick somewhat closer to the commonly understood theme of eschatology for 2 Thessalonians. Yet how ironic it is that his discussion of the theology of 2 Thessalonians (not written by Paul, according to Donfried) sounds so much more "Pauline" than his treatment of 1 Thessalonians.

Marshall believes that Philippians is a unified letter, though not based on some of the more sophisticated recent arguments from literary structure, notably a grand inversion (e.g. C. Talbert, D. A. Black, Luter and Lee). He also holds that Paul probably wrote Phil 2:5-11, the "Christ Hymn." His candidate for an overall theme is "unity," also championed recently by Black, though "partnership in the gospel" (which requires unity) seems closer to Paul's emphasis.

Marshall discerns that the foundational reason Philemon is in the NT canon is because of the slavery issue. His brief discussion, while thought-provoking, is somewhat one-sided.

In spite of the above-stated concerns, all three authors offer some helpful insights from which evangelicals can profit. Thus, both volumes can be given qualified recommendations for evangelical scholars and pastors (though not much for lay students) in their study of the Pauline literature.

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Paul's Letter to the Philippians in Light of Disunity in the Church. By Davorin Peterlin. Leiden: Brill, 1995, 272 pp., \$88.75.

Peterlin's work, a revision of his 1992 doctoral dissertation under I. Howard Marshall, attempts to establish the occasion and overall aim of Philippians. After an