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Review: Philippians

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The volume is divided into two sections. The first, "Preliminary Steps of Synoptic Exegesis," addresses the basic issues affecting synoptic exegesis (i.e., background considerations and discussion of the synoptic "problem"). The second and longer section, "Basic Steps of Synoptic Exegesis," emphasizes the practical ways to interpret the synoptic gospels. The thrust of the book lies in the second section where McKnight skillfully explains and evaluates the critical approaches to synoptic interpretation (historical, form and redaction criticisms) and demonstrates his own technique in exegeting the synoptic gospels.

The book's *tour de force* is its well-balanced approach. McKnight does not blindly condemn critical methods. For this he should be commended, since he challenges the evangelical community to evaluate and not merely react to critical methodology. Dispelling the myth that use of critical methods presupposes a liberal bias, McKnight proposes that the "higher criticisms," when properly understood and implemented, can enhance one's understanding of a Biblical passage.

A refreshing aspect of McKnight's approach is his emphasis on a neglected area of seminary education: background considerations. He recommends that every seminary student, before graduation, read a wide variety of literary sources that surrounded the gospel writings such as QL, Josephus' *Jewish Wars* and the Gospel of Thomas. McKnight concludes that those who have not read this "minimal amount of material [are] frankly unprepared for interpretation and insensitive to the task of New Testament exegesis" (p. 29).

There are many practical aspects to this volume. McKnight leads the reader step by step through a synoptic word study. He offers many helpful insights about using a synopsis (e.g. underlining). I particularly enjoyed his personal illustrations to solidify a point in his methodology. He also demonstrates how to do a motif analysis. During his practical exercises McKnight also suggests what reference books should be used and purchased.

My criticisms of the book are few. It would have been helpful, for example, to have had Scripture and author indices. McKnight's work, nevertheless, will serve the evangelical community well. I hope that it becomes a required textbook for college/seminary courses in NT exegesis and/or courses in the synoptic gospels. I also recommend this work to pastors who want to strengthen their skills in synoptic interpretation. It will complement the classic work edited by I. Howard Marshall entitled *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977). If Marshall's work can be seen as the theoretical foundation for NT exegesis, then McKnight's work (and hence the series) can be seen as its accompanying workbooks. The bibliographies at the end of each chapter will assist the student in further research. I eagerly await the other volumes in this series (*Introducing New Testament Exegesis, Interpreting the Gospel of John, Acts of the Apostles, Pauline Letters, Hebrews, Apocalypse*). I can only see positive contributions from the series for the evangelical community.

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Philippians. By Moisés Silva. Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary. Chicago: Moody, 1988, xxiii + 255 pp., n.p.

The long-awaited leadoff volume of the Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary (WEC) series has finally arrived. And, for those who think that "heightened expectation only makes for severe disappointment," Silva's volume is decidedly an exception to that rule. It was well worth waiting for.

Sometime before publication I was privileged to see the galley proofs of the initial section of Silva's work. It was distributed to WEC contributors as a sort of embodied style guide. Admittedly I was impressed (and excited) by what I saw in that brief segment. I also was cautious, however, since many projects start well but run out of gas (whether it be energy, creativity, etc.) long before they conclude. Fortunately, to a truly exemplary extent Silva has pressed on and reached the goal of a balanced (conservative yet innovative) commentary. And, since Silva is NT coordinator for the series, hopefully readers can expect more of the same.

Several of the special series features described by General Editor Kenneth Barker on pp. xi-xii are worthy of note in regard to Silva's excellent execution. First, the fresh translation of the author provides the opportunity to make one's case in a uniquely compressed (in this case, paraphrased) way, knowing most careful students and scholars will be comparing the results closely with the Greek text, *NASB*, *NIV*, *RSV*, etc. Second, the flow of the argument and central theme are to be consistently stressed, which Silva does throughout. Third, the author's discretion in regard to text-critical and other technical questions discussed in the Additional Notes sections was judicious, though illuminating, in the bulk of the cases.

Silva himself has adapted two stylistic features in most helpful ways. First, he has written exegetical essays on sections (p. xiv) as opposed to atomistic discussions in which you seldom see the forest for the trees. While this may prove frustrating to some seeking a quick answer, it will make for a much better overall understanding of Philippians, which has suffered unduly from the patchwork-quilt mentality of many of its interpreters over the centuries. Further, the author has developed various aspects of his introductory section (pp. 1-35) to a dynamic level. His discussions of language and style (pp. 11-13), literary integrity (pp. 14-16), textual history (pp. 22-27) and exegetical history (pp. 28-35, complementing his earlier bibliography on pp. xix-xxiii) are outstanding though amazingly succinct contributions.

Even his treatment of literary structure, with which I disagree significantly, is thoughtful and consistently presented in the outline on p. 18. (Note, however, the misprint "1:27-2:8," which should read "1:27-2:18," on p. 17.) While the general skeleton is basically sound (with the exception of the blurring of the specialized roles of 4:2-9 and 4:10-20, which Silva has lumped together as "Final Concerns"), the meat on the bones, being organized around Silva's doctrinal center of sanctification (pp. 19-21), which is erected on "the twin truths of human responsibility and divine sovereignty" (p. 21), is suspect. Silva considers, then rejects, the theme introduced in Phil 1:5 ("partnership [*koinōnia*] in the gospel") as having overarching validity. Yet his resulting outline is still so far superior to most (even evangelical) treatments as to be a major step in the right direction. (Note, however, the general similarity to G. Hawthorne's structure in his 1983 *Philippians* volume [Word Biblical Commentary], pp. xlviii-xlix.)

Throughout the commentary Silva makes wise use of linguistic insights and is generally at pains to note and fairly discuss differing viewpoints. This is highly commendable and requires rigorous discipline in a volume this size. Also he has sagely noted the "excessive attention" given to the famous *Carmen Christi* section (2:6-11) "at the expense of obscuring some other important features of the letter" (p. 19).

Nevertheless, at a couple of junctures Silva has perhaps failed to heed his own warning about superimposing theological exegesis, articulated so well in his recent *Has the Church Misread the Bible?* Does his desire to support his central conception of sanctification lead him to conclude that *en hymin* in 1:6 and 2:13 ("in you" or "among you"?) is speaking of individual salvation, which is decidedly against the grain of the two wider contexts (pp. 55, 135 ff.)?

Such concerns aside, Silva's volume on Philippians has plowed some new ground (and relandscaped some old) with such high quality that it gives the new Wycliffe series a most positive christening and challenges Biblical commentaries in general—and works on Philippians in particular—to match its contributions. In that regard, the forthcoming volume on Philippians by P. O'Brien in the NIGTC series is eagerly anticipated.

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Interpreting the Resurrection: Examining the Major Problems in the Stories of Jesus' Resurrection. By Gerald O'Collins. Mahwah: Paulist, 1988, 88 pp., \$8.95.

The volume under review is the latest of twenty-one books from O'Collins' pen, and he thinks that like the women who came to Jesus' tomb he shall now remain silent about the subject. O'Collins holds to a high, apparently orthodox Christology.

He discusses the materials as one who, though he lives in the literature of the critical study of Christ and the gospels, intends to commit himself only to Christ and to truth. He says he wants to approach the study in three ways: as a scholar, as a Christian finding meaning for moral life and Christian duty, and as a worshiper of Christ with "fear and great joy." Yet he acknowledges that most of his book is about scholarship.

Chapter 1—"What Were the Easter Appearances Like?"—examines the nature of the experiences of those who saw the risen Lord and the form of them. As it turns out, O'Collins has to treat also the nature and form of the resurrected Christ. He analyzes the views of three authors: R. H. Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* (1971); Pheme Perkins, *Resurrection: New Testament Witness and Contemporary Reflection* (1983); and H. Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden nicht bei den Toten: Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi* (1985). Fuller thinks the experiences were not "incidents open to neutral observation . . . but revelatory events in which the Christological significance of Jesus was disclosed," "revelatory encounters." Perkins thinks they were ecstatic spiritual experiences not unlike those that OT prophets had of God and the common spiritual experiences of other NT persons. Kessler thinks they were unique to those early days of Christianity, limited in number but really inexplicable. Our author is negative in the main about all three, though he presents his own views in connection with later chapters. He seems to opt for a view like Kessler's.

Chapter 2 is entitled "Mary Magdalene as Major Witness to Jesus' Resurrection." By "witness" O'Collins means "someone who has first-hand knowledge of . . . events." He does not mention the body of Jesus but only the person in his definition of Jesus' resurrection. Mary Magdalene figures in five of "the six resurrection narratives . . . found in the Gospel tradition." This has been a matter of great interest to recent NT scholars, especially feminists. The debate between authors from Gregory the Great to Bultmann, Hoskyns, Dodd and Barrett and a dozen more is reported. O'Collins concludes that in spite of Mary's near ubiquity in the reports she and the other women only "announce" the resurrection. The apostles were the "witnesses," among whom Peter is most prominent.

Chapter 3 asks: "Did Jesus Eat the Fish?" (Luke 24:42-43). The author is now interested in the nature of the resurrection body of Jesus. He seems to say it was a permanent body, in some real sense the same as the one placed in the tomb and in which he ascended to heaven. His words for the nature of it are "transformed" and "eschatological." He raises more questions than he solves and fails to bring the