

*Paul and His Opponents*, edited by Stanley E. Porter. Pauline Studies 2. Leiden: Brill, 2005. Pp. xii + 257. ISBN 90-04-14701-2. Hardcover. US\$ 99.00.

This volume is the second in the series of five volumes on Pauline Studies edited by Stanley E. Porter, an outstanding scholar in New Testament studies. The title of the first volume is *Pauline Canon*. The last three have not yet appeared and are tentatively titled as *Paul the Theologian* (vol. 3), *Paul's World* (vol. 4), and *Paul: Jew, Greek and Roman* (vol. 5). Each volume is composed of contributions from different scholars. The contributors of the volume under discussion are drawn from leading scholars in the field from different parts of the world: Stanley E. Porter, McMaster Divinity College, Canada; Jerry L. Sumney, Lexington, USA; Mark D. Nanos, Rockhurst University, Kansas City, USA; N. H. Taylor, University of Zululand, South Africa; John C. Hurd, Trinity College, Toronto, Canada; Christian Stettler, University of Zürich, Switzerland; Craig A. Evans, Acadia Divinity College, Wolfville, Canada; and Ross Saunders, Macquarie University, Australia.

The essays by Porter (pp. 1–5) and Sumney (pp. 7–58) give an overview of the entire volume. In his introductory essay Porter identifies three questions that occupy most of the discussion on Paul and his opponents: (a) what is meant by opponents; (b) the method used in the discussion about the opponents; and (c) who the opponents are (p. 1). Many scholars have recognized the importance of this topic in Pauline studies. This volume presents indisputable evidence supporting this recognition. Sumney, in his essay “Studying Paul’s Opponents: Advances and Challenges,” begins with the work of F. C. Baur who identified a two-party opposition which is Jewish or Petrine (p. 10). The next section of the essay surveys the hypotheses about the opponents in the Pauline letters. The rest of the essay pays attention to the questions of method, anti-Pauline movements and the relationship between the historical context and the letters (pp. 7–58). This essay complements the essays that follow by focusing on individual epistles of the Pauline corpus and how the question of opponents is discussed by scholars in each book. It represents a very helpful overview since not all the Pauline epistles feature in the essays that form part of this volume.

This volume first identifies some attempts that have been made toward defining opponents in Pauline studies. Opponents may be described in terms of teachings which reveal specific agendas in theological, missiological, and ecclesiastical areas (p. 2). Throughout the essays one finds scholars wrestling with both the text and context in an attempt to piece together what they consider a portrait of the opponents against whom a particular letter or section of it argues. Some scholars study the social dynamics of the conflict situation and even use modern social analytical theories to determine the nature of the opposition. Nanos, for example, identifies the oppo-

nents in Galatians using this approach which “provides a snapshot of the thoroughly intra-Jewish nature of the social setting and polemic of Paul and the other early believers in Christ of the period” (p. 90). However, in some Pauline letters the nature of the opposition may not be easily identifiable. For example, in Colossian studies as early as 1973 there were already “44 different suggestions” as to the identity of the opponents (p. 170). What constitutes opponents in Colossians is based on clues from the text combined with some evidence from the historical context (pp. 170–71). A question may be raised at this point as to whether there is a set of criteria that can be proposed for the definition of opponents. In examining the meaning of opponents in Romans, Porter claims that “even though the level of antagonism is not as great or explicit as it is in other letters, this does not mean that there were not those within the church at Rome who had questions regarding Paul” (p. 167). Some scholars claim that opponents may be identifiable only in polemic texts. Porter’s assertion seems to challenge this view. However, some scholars have found other methods for the study of the opponents. In her dissertation Elizabeth Bugg (“Baptism, Bodies, and Bonds: The Rhetoric of Empire in Colossians,” [PhD diss., Harvard University, 2006], 10) suggests that rhetorical analysis is an alternative approach and raises a new discussion to the study of the opponents. She claims that “insufficient attention has been paid to the discourses that have shaped the community’s rhetorical universe.” Although this approach has been criticized for imposing not only structures but ideas into the text that are not inherently present, it, however, offers a promising direction that studies the whole book or section before one can determine whether there are opponents or not. Other text-based methods such as discourse analysis may also be explored in this direction. These approaches are not addressed in the volume, but may be worth exploring.

The second major question that this volume addresses is that of the method used to study the opponents. The major and most recent contribution in this area is the work of Sumney. He developed “an explicit and consistent method for determining the nature of Paul’s opponents” (p. 3). With his method “he differentiates explicit statements, allusions and affirmations, and whether these statements are found within polemical, apologetic and didactic contexts, and within the main sections of the letter (what he calls epistolary periods)” (p. 3). In his essay in this volume Sumney draws the attention of the readers and interpreters of Pauline letters to the importance of the relationship between the historical context and a letter. Nanos claims that the “interpretation of Paul’s sketchy description of his meeting in Jerusalem... has proven to be decisive for the interpretation of the Galatian situation” (p. 59). Nanos starts with a hypothesis for the identity of the pseudo-brethren, followed by a translation of Paul’s identifying terminol-

ogy and finally the exegesis of Gal 2:1–10. Taylor argues that the opposing parties must be treated individually and should be examined within their theological, missiological, and ecclesiological agenda (p. 99). Porter observes that the opponents are addressed in the thanksgiving section in the Epistle to the Romans. The place of the discussion on the opponents within the literary context of Romans is an indication of the level of conflict that prevailed. Therefore the study of the literary structure may be an important aspect of the method of identifying opponents in a given book (p. 154). The method proposed by Stettler for Colossians first examines the explicit statements about the opponents and how the statements relate to the identity of the opponents (p. 175). He also weighs evidence based on “indirect allusions to the opponents” (p. 197). The methodology for identifying the opponents in the Pauline epistles does not seem to be uniform. One may understand this and find justification for it because most of the epistles are occasional letters. Therefore, there are factors that influence how the writer approaches the subject and the extent of openness.

The third question addressed in this volume is the question of who the opponents are. There is so much diversity of opinion that there is hardly any consensus among the scholars. The proposals made by different authors are carefully considered before they are dismissed. The process of sifting through the various views is laborious but necessary. The essay by Sumney has a section that takes one through the major views on the opponents in each of the Pauline epistles except for Philemon (pp. 12–50). Philemon is excluded because of a lack of any indication of opposition. The pursuit for the identity of the opponents has its limitations, but the recent shift as documented in this volume, toward a more refined methodology is beginning to sift out many theories that are not text-based. There are some strong views that compare the context with the text. But similarity in itself has proven not to be decisive in determining the identity of the opponents. For example, Stettler dismisses the claims of Martin and Arnold on the basis of lack of methodology. He claims that “it is only from explicit statements about the opponents that we can gain certainty about their identity” (p. 172).

This volume marks a very important milestone in Pauline studies. The question of the opponents is a long-drawn-out debate that needs to be settled. This volume summarizes the arguments of the latest research and forges a path towards a clear identification of the opponents. The development of methodology for this task is a significant development. The settlement of the question of the identification of the opponents in Pauline epistles will throw light on many passages that would otherwise remain obscure. Despite the strides demonstrated by this volume in the direction of resolving this problem there is still more to be done. There is still a wide

gap between the historical context and the textual data. The reconstructions need to be based primarily on the text and only secondarily on the historical context rather than the other way round. The book does recognize that some Pauline epistles discuss the issue of opponents more explicitly than others. Therefore, the question of opponents will be more critical for the interpretation of Colossians than it is for Romans.

Any serious Pauline scholar has to wrestle with the issues raised in this volume. It is a needed reference resource for scholars in biblical studies and other areas of theological enquiry. This book will also raise interest in other passages of the New Testament (such as Johannine writings) that tend to wrestle with similar issues.

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*Daniel: Wisdom to the Wise. Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, by Zdravko Stefanovic. Boise: Pacific Press, 2007. Pp. 480. ISBN 978-0-8163-2212-1. Hardcover. US\$ 34.99.

Zdravko Stefanovic teaches Old Testament languages (Hebrew and Aramaic) and biblical studies at Walla Walla University. Among Seventh-day Adventist scholars, particularly those who have written on the book of Daniel, Stefanovic's volume appears to be the broadest in terms of exposition and application, as can be seen in the symbols and images in Dan 7–9 which are applied throughout church history to different people and events. Concerning his approach, the author follows the traditional view (i.e., Daniel wrote his book in the sixth century B.C.), while at the same time being open to its challenges. In line with other Seventh-day Adventist biblical scholars, he uses the historical grammatical method to respond adequately to the question of 'what it meant, and what it means?'

In the introduction to the commentary, the author provides an overview to all the relevant issues of the book. This is followed by his analysis of chapter one. Stefanovic believes that this chapter should be treated separately as it is a "prologue that records the historical setting for the entire book" (p. 43). The rest of the chapters are then divided into two main sections, i.e., chapters 2–6 and 7–12. Within these two main sections, a separate section is assigned for each chapter, dealing directly with the text. Each main section begins with a general overview of the background and the issues related to each chapter. The overview of the first section is mainly on narrative and historical issues. The second is on prophecy. The author employs the same approach throughout the entire commentary in order to facilitate the use of the volume. In doing so, he identifies in each verse the