

Hawthorne, Gerald F. *Philippians*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 43. Waco, Texas: Word Books Publisher, 1983. lii + 232 pp. \$18.95.

The "Editorial Preface" to the Word Biblical Commentary claims that the broad stance of its contributors is evangelical, as this term is understood in its positive and historical sense. That is, there is "a commitment to scripture as divine revelation, and to the truth and power of the Christian gospel" (p. ix).

There are several features that make this commentary series easy to use, two of which deserve special mention here: (1) The abbreviations used are divided into ten lists, thus making them easy to find and identify. Besides the usual lists of general items, periodicals and reference works, apocryphal and pseudepigraphical works, other lists of abbreviations include "Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Texts," "Targumic Material," "Other Rabbinic Works," "Orders and Tractates in Mishnaic and Related Literature," and "Nag Hammadi Tractates." (2) There are seven indexes, one for each of the following: ancient authors, modern authors, selected subjects, biblical texts, Dead Sea Scrolls, rabbinic and mishnaic writings, and finally patristic writings.

A unique feature of this series is that the various commentators provide in each instance their own translation of the biblical text, thus enabling them to work into the translation their understanding of words and syntax. The commentators' own translations then become the basis for their particular commentaries.

The bibliographical information furnished in each commentary, moreover, is extensive, and is another strong point of this series. Preceding the "Introduction," there is a bibliography listing commentaries that have been used in the preparation of each individual volume. The Introduction itself begins with a "General Bibliography" containing references to works on the topic of introduction, and each subdivision of the Introduction contains a bibliography. Within the body of the commentary, each passage that is dealt with has its own bibliography, as well. Finally, the volume may also include a substantial concluding bibliography (for instance, the volume on Colossians and Philemon, treated in a separate review on pp. 74-76, below, has an additional nine-page bibliography at its conclusion).

The format of the series volumes presents five clearly defined sections. The first is the commentator's translation of the biblical text. This is followed by "Notes," where variant readings are listed, along with manuscript witnesses and the commentator's observations on the variants. The third section, "Form/Structure/Setting," is devoted to the literary form and structure of the passage being studied. The two concluding sections, "Comment" and "Explanation," present the exposition of the biblical passages and relevance to biblical studies.

With this general background, we may now make some observations that relate specifically to Hawthorne's commentary on Philippians. Hawthorne sees this book as a single literary unit, written by the Apostle Paul around A.D. 59-61 from prison in Caesarea. Those who opposed the proclamation of the gospel, and thus became Paul's opponents at Philippi, were Jews, who had their own missionaries proclaiming a message of righteousness and perfection that was available through circumcision and compliance with certain laws.

On the whole, Hawthorne offers penetrating and interesting insights into the text of Philippians. However, in one place, Phil 1:23-24, where Paul expresses himself as being upon the horns of a dilemma, Hawthorne faces the decision as to which horn to light upon, and is obviously uncomfortable in settling upon either of them. His translation of these two verses reads, "Indeed, I am torn between two desires. I desire to break camp and to be with Christ, which is a very much better thing for me, and I desire to remain alive in this body, which is a more urgent need for you" (p. 32). He observes that some commentators see in other passages a consistent Pauline doctrine of life after death: The Christian who dies sleeps until the second coming of Jesus, at that time being awakened and raised to a new life (1 Cor 15:35-55; 1 Thess 4:13-5:10). On the other hand, Phil 1:23 seems to suggest that at death the Christian is immediately ushered into the presence of his Lord. This would render belief in the future resurrection "superfluous." And thus, we find Hawthorne in his own two-horned dilemma.

Instead of choosing one position and explaining the other in light of his choice, Hawthorne attempts a compromise between the two, thus introducing a position that is seriously questionable. Following the lead of several other commentators, he wishes to preserve what he sees as Paul's understanding that there is fellowship with Christ immediately following death, while maintaining the integrity of a future resurrection. Thus, he concludes that Paul envisioned "an intermediate existence in which any deceased Christian . . . is 'with Christ' after death and before the resurrection in a state of companionship with Christ in glory" (p. 50). This intermediate state has no independent existence apart from the resurrection, but (here following H. Ridderbos) "'to be with Christ' after death and before the resurrection 'does not have the full redemptive significance in Paul's epistles that the resurrection has'" (p. 51).

To say the least, this compromise has a hollow ring, especially so in view of the passages in 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians. An explanation of Phil 1:23 based on Paul's "consistent doctrine of the life after death" subsequent to the resurrection would be truer to Paul than is this compromise. But aside from this questionable interpretation, the volume as a whole is a worthy and useful publication.