

Michael Galea/Canon John Ciarlò (eds), *ST. PAUL IN MALTA: A COMPENDIUM OF PAULINE STUDIES*. (Veritas Press; Malta 1992) 132pp.

In 1987, Dr. Heinz Wernecke published *Die tatsächliche Romfahrt des Apostels Paulus* (Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 127; Stuttgart 1987); in this book, which contains the author's dissertation findings, W. argues that when St. Luke wrote that Paul, shipwrecked, came ashore at *Melitē* (Acts 28,1), Luke understood *Melitē* to be Cephallenia, an island off the west coast of Greece, and not Malta. (In 1991, Dr. Warnecke, with T. Schirmacher, published a second monograph on the subject of St. Paul and Malta: *Paulus war nie auf Malta* [Häussler TFU; Stuttgart 1991]). W.'s 1987 book provoked responses. In Germany, Dr. Jürgen Wehnert, of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Tübingen, published a scathing criticism of W.'s book (cf. "Gestrandet: zur einer These über den Schiffsbruch des Apostels Paulus auf dem Weg nach Rom", *ZTK* 87(1990) 67-99; further: *ibid*, "...und da erführen wir, dass die Insel Kephallonia heist: zur neuesten Auslegung von APG 27-28 und ihrer Methode", *ZTK* 88(1991) 169-180). On Malta Professors Carmelo Sant, Professor Emeritus of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Malta, Paul Guillaumier, biblical scholar, and Joseph Cassar Pullicino, folklorist scholar, wrote, each from his own perspective, essays in opposition to W.'s contention that Paul was never in Malta. M. Galea and Canon

J. Ciarlò have gathered into one compendium the writings of Wehnert, Sant, Guillaumier and Pullicino — adding a translation of Acts 27 and 28 and an address given by Pope John Paul II on the occasion of his visit to Malta in May, 1990. On pages 98-114 an excellent bibliography provides material useful for the study of Acts 27-28, and page 51 presents two important inscriptions (one in Greek, one in Latin) pertinent to the discussion of *prōtos*, a term used by Luke to describe Publius of Malta. Useful maps are found to round out the presentations of some of the contributors to this compendium.

The hope of *St. Paul in Malta* is to provide its reader, not only with a refutation of W.'s thesis, but also with scholarly reflection on the matter at the heart of the discussion: the journey and shipwreck of Paul, Paul's being deemed a god by his surviving the bite of the serpent, and Paul's ("our", as Acts says) stay in Malta, an occasion of healing the father of Publius and many others. Have the editors of this compendium achieved their goal?

Certainly, Wehnert's critique (newly reworked) of Warnecke's *Romfahrt* makes appear reckless the statement of A. Suhl, Professor of New Testament at the University of Münster, that "Ich kann mir nicht vorstellen, dass jetzt die Malta-Theorie noch eine Wiederbelebung erfahren wird" (Warnecke, *Romfahrt*, 14). The objections of Wehnert to W.'s thesis are very grave and, unless matched once again in equal weight,

leave this reader unwilling to consider any site but Malta as the *Melitē* Paul reached after his shipwreck. Particularly destructive to W.'s theory is the obviously tortuous way in which W. must argue that the name *Melitē* can be applied (though in the ancient world it never was) to Cephallenia. Unless W. has documentation that Cephallenia was known as *Melitē* in the ancient world, it is useless to argue that details of Acts 27-28 can apply to Cephallenia as well as to Malta.

The work of Professor Sant, done independently from the form and content of Wehnert, substantially underscores some of the severe Wehnert opposition against W.'s thesis. Sant further approaches the problem from a different perspective: whereas W. argued that Cephallenia was better qualified than Malta to be Acts' *Melitē*, and Wehnert in the main wrote against a Cephallenia-theory, Sant gathers together a number of positive reasons for saying that Malta is *Melitē*.

In the third and longest essay presented in this volume, P. Guillaumier brings still further arguments to bear against W.'s thesis. Particularly suasive for me is Guillaumier's presentation of navigational arguments from James Smith, *The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul*, (London 1880), updated by C.J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (WUNT 49; Tübingen 1989) and Guillaumier's discussion of the Alexandria-Puteoli annona shipping route (78-79); these points support an identification of *Melitē* and Malta.

Finally, in what is admittedly a less decisive source by which to prove a Pauline visit to Malta, folklorist Joseph Cassar Pullicino has brought together, for this debate and for posterity, the many associations of Malta with the figure of St. Paul. In study of the ancient world, scholars are always wary of ignoring old, old traditions as a source of new knowledge or as support of knowledge gained elsewhere. Even if, in this particular case, the Christian victory over Islam spurred the Maltese to intensify their remembrance of St. Paul (and to create some new ones), the lingering question remains: whence all these traditions and what might be the cause of their tenacious hold on the Maltese people?

There is another consideration proposed in this compendium for its reader. It is not only Dr. Warnecke who challenged the identification of *Melitē* as Malta; so have certain strains of modern biblical scholarship when they claim that some (and to some biblical scholars, practically all) of Acts 27-28,11 is unhistorical or historically unproveable. Here we are dealing, not with the limited argument about tides and trade-routes and the meaning of Publius as *prōtos* of Malta and the reasonableness of Phoinix as a Cretan port and the presence or absence of snakes on Malta and whether or not Maltese merit the name *barbaroi*, but with the historical reliability of the entire Lucan work (Gospel and Acts) and particularly with the role Lucan theology played in Luke's presentation of sources or in

his creating stories and speeches. In this matter of biblical exegesis, both Wehnert and Guillaumier have further contributions to make. Wehnert is sceptical of Pauline speech on the sea, miracle and conversions on Malta; whatever value his arguments be against Warnecke, in the bigger world of biblical scholarship Wehnert represents only a certain kind of scholar, and is correctly challenged by Guillaumier (69-72). A particular value of Guillaumier's essay, for this reader, is his presentation of the history of biblical criticism whereby he touches upon essential problems in this criticism: Lucan authorship of Acts and of the "we" passages (of which Acts 27-28,11 form a part), the historicity of speeches and miracles, the creative literary freedom of authors, and the question of literary genre, or how Luke may have been influenced in his telling his story by literary (and unhistorical) devices used by authors of Luke's time.

But as to the larger theme (that Luke, as hellenistic author, created some or all of Acts 27-28,11 and had/did not have sources, whether himself or others) — this theme will continue to occupy scholars beyond the good contributions offered in this compendium.

Obvious as is the pain Dr. Warnecke has caused all these writers in his honest presentation of his research (to say Paul was never in Malta affects not only intellects), this volume he has unwittingly caused to be printed is very valuable to everyone, and is a great contribution to the understanding we all seek in this matter. It was unwarrantedly premature, I repeat, to assert that the "Malta-theory" will not experience a resurgence; history has too often been on the side of this theory.

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