

Joseph A. FITZMYER, *Romans* (Anchor Bible 33, Doubleday; New York 1993) xxxiv, 793 pp.

A massive commentary on Paul's letter to the Romans in the Anchor Bible series. The preliminary pages carry a preface, six lists of abbreviations (principal, grammatical, writings of Ignatius of Antioch, writings of Philo of Alexandria, Dead Sea Scrolls, others), a continuous fresh translation of the whole letter, nine introductory discussions (Rome and Roman Christians, Authorship, The Text, Unity and Integrity, Occasion and Purpose, Date and Place of Composition, Language and Style, Structure and Outline, Pauline Teaching in Romans), and a general bibliographical list.

The commentary proceeds by literary units (sixty of them). Every unit has a translation of the pericope under discussion (brought over from the preliminary pages), a comment on the pericope as a whole (embodying the overall thrust of the text), notes on individual lemmata (containing a detailed treatment of problematic words and phrases which the general reader may pass over) and a special bibliographical list (referring to the particular message of the pericope). The volume closes with a helpful index of 387 subjects and 2459 authors discussed or cited.

The author is well equipped to deal with the letter to the Romans. He already discussed this letter in the first edition of the *Jerome Biblical*

Commentary (JBC) where he wrote on Acts of the Apostles, Life of Paul, NT Epistles, Galatians, Philippians, Romans, Philemon, Pauline Theology. He discussed it again in the second edition (NJBC) where he wrote on NT Epistles, Galatians, Romans, Philemon, Paul, Pauline Theology. The present commentary is a revised and expanded edition of his former studies. In JBC (53:10) he endorsed the Ephesian destination of Rom 16,123. In NJBC (51:10) and in the present commentary (p.64) he opts for the Roman destination. In JBC (53:56) and NJBC (51:56 and 82:85) he understands the *eph' hō* of Rom 5,12 cd as a casual conjunction (since, because, inasmuch as) and feels that it does not contradict Paul's doctrine in Rom 5,12 a-b. In the present commentary (p.416) he feels that the casual meaning does contradict Paul's doctrine in Rom 5,12 a-b, and understands the phrase as a consecutive conjunction (with the result that, so that). Actually the difference is only syntactic. The fundamental meaning is the same. In both cases the author explains that Paul brackets together the sin of one man and the individual sins of all human beings as complementary causes of death.

The translation is custom made. In the commentary the term *doulos* is always translated by "slave" (Rom 1,1; 6,16.17.20; see also 6,19), and it is observed (p.231) that the usual translation "servant" is a heritage from English Bible versions

especially of American background. In the Anchor Bible commentary on Luke (by the same author) it is always translated as "servant" (Lk 2,29; 15,22; 17,7.9.10). The AV has "servant" in Lk and Rom. In NJBC (51:15) *doulos* is a "slave", while JBC (53:15) has "slave [servant]". *Hilasterion* is "atonement" in JBC (53:40), "expiation" in NJBC (51:41) and in the commentary (p.120). In Rom 4,3 JBC (53:44) and NJBC (51:45) have "put faith in God", while the commentary translates "put his faith in God" (p.373).

The commentary is a precious tool of study and research. It describes in great detail the Old Testament or Hellenistic background of every pauline phrase and concept. Whenever it discusses a debated topic (and this is usually the case) it lists, and gives extensive coverage to, every possible opinion (eleven alternative meanings are proposed for *eph' hō*, pp.413-417). And while the author shows his bias for a particular opinion (generally a well pondered opinion) he indicates all the good points of the other options thereby encouraging the reader to reach his own conclusions. Rarely does he preclude the acceptance of a particular opinion by labelling it "impossible" (p.87) or "without reason" (p.251).

The abundance of bibliographical information is simply staggering. The general bibliography covers 52 pages. It is divided into three sections: Introductory Surveys,

Commentaries and Monographs. The Commentaries are subdivided into four chronological periods (patristic, medieval, xv-xviii centuries, xix-xx centuries). The Monographs are listed in two categories, bearing on the pauline letter or on general pauline topics. The special bibliographies appended to each literary unit complexively cover 158 pages. It happens sometimes that a reference appears in a slightly different manner in different bibliographical lists (see Benoit, P., pp. 162 and 469; Beker, J.C., pp. 170 and 511).

The comment and notes on the single literary units strive not only to expose the genuine message of Paul, but also to dissipate the perplexity and resentment it may generate in present day readers as it certainly generated in the pristine addressees. Paul was polemical by temperament. A nonpolemical letter would not be pauline. And a polemical letter is bound to elicit mixed reactions among the readers.

The letter to the Romans tactfully poses as an expository treatise. The commentary, setting aside the usual classification of ancient correspondence as "letters," or "epistles" acknowledges the expository form of the letter by labelling it an "essayletter" (p.69), a "didactic and hortatory letter intended for discussion" (p.79), a "formal lecture" (p.92). But it senses that Paul is dealing with a problem which it understands as a division existing within the community of

Roman Christians, between strong and weak, between Jew and Greek (p.80). It also feels that Paul solves the problem by appealing to the mystery of divine election, expressed in somewhat startling language. So it goes out of its way to explain that Israel's fall does not imply God's infidelity (p.326), that hating only means loving less (p.563), that God's free choice is not arbitrary (p.572).

The author is less bent on allaying our scruples when he discusses the pauline teaching in the preliminary section (pp. 103-143). He says that Romans is a multipurpose letter (p.79), but admits that "the main theme of Romans deals with justification by faith without the need of observing the Mosaic law" (p.32) or that Rom 1-15 deals with "justification and salvation of Jew and Greek alike by grace through faith, apart from deeds of the law" (p.58). He does not offer an exhaustive exposition of this main theme, possibly because he is wary of reading modern problems and solutions into the text of the letter.

He actually mentions the protological thinking of Paul that does not allow him to arrive at the distinction between God's absolute and permissive will, introduced in the time of Augustine (p.108), to unpack the notion of "God" when it is attributed to Christ (p.114), or (possibly) develop a theory of natural law (p.306).

He divides his exposition of the pauline teaching into five sections

(Theology Proper, Christology, Pneumatology, Anthropology, Christian Conduct), and subdivides each section into several items, in the following way.

Theology Proper: God, The Love of God, The Uprightness [or Righteousness] of God, The Wrath of God, Divine Plan of Salvation, The Old Testament, God's Gospel. Christology: Jesus Christ [Names and Titles used of Jesus in Romans] Jesus, Christ, The Lord, The Son, Adam of the Eschaton, God, The Role Ascribed to Jesus in Romans, The Effects of the Christ-Event. Pneumatology: The Spirit, Grace. Anthropology: Body, Flesh, Soul, Spirit, Mind, Heart, Conscience, Humanity, Gentiles, Jews, The Law, Sin, Humanity in Christ, Faith, Love/Charity, Hope, Baptism, Body of Christ, Church. Christian Conduct: In Christ, Prayer, Christian Conduct, Attitude about Civil Authorities.

He says something on each item (always with special reference to Romans) in the manner of a biblical dictionary. He does not try to reduce these concepts to a pauline or post-pauline doctrinal system. He abstains from discussing at any length the problem of salvation by faith or by grace, the relation between faith and grace, law and works, Galatians and Romans (he does mention that Romans is less polemical than Galatians when it deals with the purpose of the law, p.131). It avoids the problem of predestination, human liberty and retribution. The reader is

kept wondering whether Romans is an organic writing, with a homogeneous message relevant to our times or a collection of doctrinal and polemic passages prompted by the temporary needs of an antique

community and the personal feelings of an ancient writer.

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Baruch A. LEVINE, *Numbers 1-20* (Anchor Bible 4, Doubleday; New York 1993) xvi, 528pp.

This is the first part of a two-volume commentary. In the original plan the commentary was to be divided between chapters 19 and 20. In actual fact it has been divided between chapters 20 and 21, for the author believes that the desert wanderings end with the arrival of the Israelites in the region of Kadesh and the death of Miriam and Aaron recorded in chapter 20. What happens afterwards (around 38 years east of Edom in J, a few months to run through, and partially subdue, Transjordan) properly belongs to the conquest of the promised land.

B.A. Levine is Skirball Professor of Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Studies at New York University. A well-known biblical scholar, he has published many studies dealing with the Pentateuch and related subjects. The Reference Bibliography lists 25 of them. One is co-authored with J.-M. de Tarragon. Six are in Hebrew, the rest in English.

The volume begins with a continuous translation of the whole text (Num 1-20; pp.1-43) in which each verse begins with a fresh line (sometimes a single verse is broken into 2-6 lines to emphasize its several elements), the tetragrammaton is represented by the consonantal transcription (YHWH; the author does not feel secure about the conventional pronunciation and transcription), many pronouns are explicated

by the corresponding noun or name in round brackets, and some explanatory words are added in round or square brackets to explicate the primitive diction of the MT.

The introduction discusses the contents (pp.45-88) and context (pp.88-109) of the Book of Numbers.

What is said about the contents refers to the whole book, and discusses the names (Hebrew, Greek, Latin, English), the interaction of the documentary sources, the literary character of the nonpriestly and priestly materials, the texts, versions, translations and commentaries. The Leningrad Codex is acknowledged as the best witness to the original text, while the Qumran fragments and the Samaritan Pentateuch are to be used with caution because of their sectarian tendencies. The ICC (by G.B. Gray) is singled out as a lasting and outstanding contribution to the exegetical interpretation.

What is said about the context deals only with chapters 1-20 (a separate contextual introduction to chapters 21-36 will appear at the beginning of the second volume). It discusses the principles of the Jahwistic and Elohist history writing (test cases: Kadesh, Edom, Kenites, Midianites, Canaanites, Amalekites) and the rationale of the Priestly legislation (test cases: levites and priests, laws of purity).

The introduction ends with the reference bibliography (pp.111-121) where full bibliographic information is included together with an abbrevi-

ated reference (author plus date, and a serial letter, in the case of multiple publications in the same year). All through the volume the abbreviated reference is incorporated with the text, so as to avoid cumbersome footnotes.

The commentary itself (pp.125-495) proceeds by literary units. Each unit has an introduction (an overview of the contents), a translation (brought forward from the beginning of the volume), notes (detailed explanation of words, texts, objects and institutions) and comments (collateral information about the biblical phenomenon). Sometimes there are several comments to one unit, or no comment at all.

The volume closes with two diagrams (itinerary of P and JE; pp.496-497), subject index (pp.499-501), modern authors index (pp.502-503), and sources index (Scripture, Mishnah, Tosephta', Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmud, Mekhilta', Sifre, medieval authors, Ugaritic, Aramaic, regional Canaanite, Phoenician, Akkadian, Moabite, Hebrew, Dead Sea Scrolls, classical; pp.504-528).

This masterly work is a valid contribution to biblical enlightenment and research. It brings the reader abreast with modern scholarship, and adds valuable insights especially when it indicates the historical situations that conditioned the biblical narratives.

The author is a staunch upholder of the documentary theory and its conventional chronological order

(JEDP). He does not feel obliged to endorse J. Wellhausen's reconstruction of Israel's religion (p.103), but considers Wellhausen's seminal insight on the Priestly source as particularly apt to explain the Priestly materials in the Book of Numbers (p.104).

Quoting G.B. Gray, he presents J as a Judean source and E as a northern Israelite source, both dating from the ninth to eighth centuries B.C. or earlier, and conflated by the JE writers around the seventh century B.C. (p.48). He takes the cue from H.L. Ginsberg and places D as a northern Israelite source of the mid-eighth century B.C., later transmitted to Judah (p.102). Countering the arguments of Y. Kaufmann and his followers who advocate the priority of P over D, he explains P as a response to D and a product of the renewed priestly activity that started at the return from the Babylonian exile (late sixth century B.C.), and continued long afterwards.

He accepts the documentary theory not only as a literary factor, but also as an exegetical tool, thereby reacting against J. Milgrom (p.49) who embraces the rabbinic dogma of the unity of the Torah, and turns to source-criticism only as a last resort. Incidentally, the reaction to the esteemed colleague surfaces in other contexts: "Milgrom (1970: 21) may also have erred in his understanding of *qesep* 'rage'" (p.142).

The rabbis look for the overall meaning of the finished Pentateuchal product. But there is no overall mean-

ing, for there is no finished Pentateuchal product. There is the overall meaning of J, E, JE, D and P. The overall meaning of P (or any other source) may not be assumed as the overall meaning of the Pentateuch, for the priestly writers made use of the foregoing traditions for their own purpose, without extensively modifying them. J, E, JD, and D have retained their individual identity, and have to be explained according to this identity.

The commentary acknowledges the mutual independence of J and E. It even separates from E the Elohist poetic selections of chapters 21-24 that stem from the literary creativity of the Israelites in Gilead, and are represented by T (for Transjordan). So that we actually have J, E+T, JE (p.73). But the analysis of the narrative texts melds all these elements into a compound JE source, thereby creating a logistic problem for Moses.

According to the author, JE doubles the journey of Moses to get the tablets of the law. He went up and brought down the tablets in Ex 19-20 (1st description). He was still on top in Ex 24,1-11; and came down later in Ex 32-34 (a reflex of the preceding event). A judicious separation of J, E and JE would produce a less objectionable order of events. The texts of Ex 19-20; 24,1-11; 32,15-24 belong together. They form a single account of Moses going up and coming down with the tablets. Both J and E featured this account, but recorded a different wording on the tablets. The JE writers

kept the Elohist record in its natural place, and presented the Jahwistic record as a renewal of the covenant, broken by the event of the golden calf.

The biblical narrative is an etiology, although it does tend to coincide with technical history as the centuries roll by. The author makes full use of the etiological factor to reconstruct the exodus event. Sometimes he presents it as time warping (p.483) or etiology (pp.96, 97, 99), but generally he calls it historiographic refraction (p.90) when it recounts events, and ethnographic juxtaposition (p.92) when it discusses people.

The Kadesh event (Num 13,26; 20,1.14.16.22) is an example of historiographic refraction (pp.90-91). The archaeological excavations at 'Ain Qudeirat (probably the biblical Kadesh or Kadesh Barnea) have uncovered settlements that flourished in the reigns of Solomon and Josiah, with some construction activity in between, but hardly any construction before Solomon. The settlements were intended as military outposts for the protection of the southern reaches of the kingdom of Judah. The Jahwist knew about Kadesh from personal experience (if he wrote under Solomon) or from the records of the united monarchy (if he wrote after Solomon). He retrojected the situation of the time of Solomon to the period of the desert wanderings, and construed Kadesh as a starting point for the attempt of the advancing Israelites to penetrate into the promised land from the south. The other Pentateuchal sources also indi-

cate Kadesh as the starting point and finishing line of the episode of the spies. So that by some geographical fudging (p.54) Kadesh can be simultaneously found in the Wilderness of Paran (Num 13,26) and in the Wilderness of Zin (Num 20,1).

We are left in the dark as to the real whereabouts of the Israelites in southern Negeb or northern Sinai. It seems that, apart from the historiographic refraction and geographical fudging, the Israelites may well have been in Kadesh for some time. As its present name implies, Kadesh was a region of water sources and consequently a natural resting place for the roaming tribes. Moreover it could be reached both by the nomadic route that started from the Bitter Lakes and pointed northeast towards Beersheba, and by the semi-nomadic route that started from the same Bitter Lakes, skirted the Sinai massif, and pointed towards Beersheba from the south (in Roman times the western route from Beersheba to the Red Sea passed through Kadesh). The lack of ancient construction activity at 'Ain Qudeirat does not necessarily exclude the presence of the Israelites, for the roaming semi-nomadic tribes do not leave much archaeological evidence. If the Israelites did attempt to penetrate into Canaan from the south, they probably passed through Kadesh.

The mission to Edom (Num 20,14-29) is another example of historiographic refraction. From Kadesh Moses informs the king of Edom that the Israelites are near his borders, and

requests permission to pass through his territory. The king refuses, and mounts a military opposition. The Israelites skirt his territory. The author observes that it was in the eighth century B.C. that Edom rebelled against Judah and started its expansion towards the west reaching the vicinity of Kadesh (pp.91-92). The Elohist retrojected the eighth century situation to the time of Moses (pp.101.491-494).

The etiological nature of the Edom narrative is evident. At the time of Moses there was neither king nor kingdom of Edom. There is also an etiological reference to David's conquests attributed to Balaam in Num 24,18. But the geographic and social (friendly or hostile) contacts between Israel and Edom are not the product of etiology. They stem from reliable patriarchal traditions that connect Israel and Edom through their reputed forefathers, Jacob and Esau. This genealogical connection could not have been excogitated after the formation of the twelve tribe system, which separated each Israelite fraction from its erstwhile neighbours and allies.

Much less is the skirting of Edom a result of etiology. At that period there were two Transjordanian routes connecting Damascus with the Red Sea. The sedentary route (king's highway) connected the principal settlements of Aram, Ammon, Moab and Edom (later on, the Romans constructed their Transjordanian road along these lines). The semi-nomadic route skirted the territories of these

peoples. The semi-nomadic Israelites followed the semi-nomadic route. An Elohist retrojection of an eighth century situation would create a chronological problem, since the Elo-

hist could have flourished earlier than the ninth to eighth centuries (p.48).

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Piero CODA, *Dio tra gli uomini. Breve cristologia*, (Edizioni Piemme; Casale Monferrato 1991) 250pp.

Piero Coda is a young priest of the Focolarini movement. He is also a theologian who teaches at the Lateran University in Rome. Both these qualities are reflected in the present book. The book is based on a lecture course given to undergraduates. It is also written with the talent of a gifted communicator in the joyful spirit of the Focolarini.

The author takes the narrative approach to his subject. Practically he limits himself to the biblical data, and includes a critical reading of the gospels; he tries to reach to the historical Jesus and his message, and he analyzes the main events of Jesus' earthly life up to his death on the cross. He then examines the testimony of Jesus' disciples to his resurrection. Finally he shows how the faith of the disciples developed into an explicit awareness of Jesus as the incarnate Son of God.

Unfortunately Coda stops short of elaborating a systematic Christology. Indeed, except for a brief mention of the Councils of Nicaea, Ephesus and Chalcedon, he leaves the great riches of patristic theology untouched.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding that omission, Coda has written a useful book. While deliberately avoiding to display his learning, he is clearly well informed on contemporary scholarship. He keeps clear of all controversy and provides solid doctrine. He also shows a sure and balanced judgement in the stand he adopts.

The positive approach and captivating style of this "brief Christology" make it a welcome handbook for prospective students of theology.

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