

Reviews

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS, VOLUME I, INTRODUCTION AND COMMENTARY ON II CORINTHIANS I - VII. International Critical Commentary, Margaret E. Thrall, Pp. xxxvi + 501. T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1994.

This is a commentary of the highest class. Recent years have witnessed the publication of several full and excellent commentaries on 2 Corinthians; one thinks especially of those by V.P. Furnish and R.P. Martin, both so good that it was hard to think what might be left for a contributor to the ICC. But Dr Thrall has exercised to the full the liberty afforded by the series to go into every possible detail, using Greek (and any other relevant language) with complete freedom (though quotations from non-biblical sources are mostly translated), and citing relevant secondary literature in abundance. The lay-out of the commentary is (at least in my opinion) superior, in that she is not hampered by the requirement to distinguish Notes from Interpretation, a process that can easily lead to repetition. Dr Furnish and Dr Martin are far too good to be forgotten, but Dr Thrall's commentary (if we may assume that Volume II will be as good as Volume I) is likely to be for many years the main reference work for the serious student of 2 Corinthians.

The present volume contains 20 pages (xvii-xxxvi) of Abbreviations and Bibliography, 77 pages of Introduction, and commentary on 1.1–7.16 (pp. 78–501). There are seven Excursuses: *ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ* in Paul (1.1); Literary plurals; *ὁ δε κύριος τὸ πνεῦμα ἐστίν* (3.17a); Mirror-vision and transformation (3.18); Christophany (4.4,6); Background of thought and significance of the antitheses in 4.8–9; Pre-Pauline tradition in 5.18–21? Dr Thrall promises in Volume II a concluding essay, in which she will consider Paul's personality and his understanding of his apostolic ministry, together with the canonical status and function of the epistle.

The exegetical part of a commentary is almost impossible to review; in this book, each of 423 pages contains numerous presuppositions, facts, inferences. To question the presuppositions, check the facts, and consider the inferences would mean writing another commentary. The Introduction however may be reviewed like any monograph. Dr Thrall discusses Authenticity (very briefly — the matter is not in debate), Unity, and Interim Events, concluding with a detailed, and very helpful, *Chronology*, which sets out clearly the results of the preceding discussions.

Dr Thrall believes that the epistle is composite. After mentioning the various hypotheses that have been proposed she deals with them one by one. The first question discussed is that of Chapters 10–13. To present the outline of her argument will illustrate the logical clarity of the

Introduction at large. It runs as follows:

- 1 Arguments for and against the separation of chaps. 10–13 from chaps. 1–9.
 - (i) In favour.
 - (ii) Statement and evaluation of arguments against separation; conclusion. [The conclusion, after 6 pages, including a detailed comparison with Demosthenes, *Ep.* 2, is that "it is preferable to conclude that chaps. 10–19 belong to a separate letter" (p. 13).]
- 2 Arguments for and against the identification of chaps. 10–13 with the Painful Letter.
 - (i) In favour.
 - (ii) Statement and evaluation of arguments against the identification of chaps. 10–13 with the Painful Letter; conclusion. [The conclusion is against identification; the decisive consideration is that the Painful Letter was concerned with *one* incident; in chaps. 10–13 "there is no such single offender" (p. 17).]
- 3 Arguments for and against the view that chaps. 10–13 belong to a letter later than chaps. 1–8/9.
 - (i) In favour.
 - (ii) Statement and evaluation of objections to this view; conclusion. [The conclusion is expressed negatively rather than as a positive assertion. "There would seem to be no decisive reason to reject the view that chaps. 10–13 contain a letter written later than the letter(s) contained in chaps. 1–9" (p. 20). It is worth noting that this in itself is not inconsistent with the view that chaps. 10–13 were a pendant attached to chaps. 1–9 when fresh news from Corinth had led Paul not to change the opinions he had earlier expressed but to feel that an addition was called for.]

The next piece to be considered is "2.14–7.4 (minus 6.14–7.1)". Again we have arguments for and against separation. Dr Thrall sees connection rather than disjunction between 7.4 and the following paragraph, and thinks that the break between 2.13 and 2.14 has been exaggerated. "The section 2.14–7.4, therefore, belongs, in our view, to its present context in chaps. 1–7(8)" (p. 24). The argument is convincing.

Next to be discussed is 6.14–7.1. The arguments in favour of and against separation from the context and the arguments for and against Pauline origin are set out in the same way as those already outlined, but they are too long and too complicated to be given in a review. Dr Thrall weighs them with care, and concludes that the contact with Qumran is doubtful; the paragraph is not non-Pauline but there are traces of a hortatory tradition that does not appear elsewhere in the letters. We should perhaps suppose that Paul "is using baptismal motifs and terminology to reinforce his own epistolary message" (p. 36). Discussion of chaps. 8 and 9 follows, with the conclusion that 8 belongs with 1–7, but 9 was originally separate. Dr Thrall has not yet finished; there is

further consideration of external evidence and of the compilation process, and finally Dr Thrall provides a survey of the major critical theories.

I know no discussion of the unity of 2 Corinthians that can be compared with this. Doubtless I am biased by the fact that on the whole Dr Thrall agrees with conclusions that I had myself reached, but the detail and depth of her argument are profoundly impressive.

It is impossible to follow Dr Thrall's discussion of the Interim Events; it is equally thorough, though she has not quite convinced me that the man who committed the offence (ὁ ἀδικητάς, 7.12) was a Corinthian rather than one who came from elsewhere.

The epistle is full of passages in which profound theology is hidden under notorious linguistic problems. I cannot recall a passage where I felt that Dr Thrall was running away from a problem, and very few where I have not found a new insight into the theology. For example: the sorting out of the images (βεβαιῶν, Χριστός, σφραγισμένος, ἀρραβῶνα) in 1.21,22; the use of triumph and odour in 2.14f.; the sustained exegesis of the notoriously difficult chapter 3; the treatment of Christophany (though I am not sure that that is the word that I should use) in 4.4–6; the treatment of building, clothing, and nakedness in 5.1–5 (especially pp. 356–370); the exegesis of the difficult (but surely Pauline) language of 5.21.

Summaries are impossible. Of this book I can only say, *Tolle, lege.*

C.K. BARRETT

WHO DID JESUS THINK HE WAS? by John C. O'Neill. *E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1995. Pp. 238, £49.*

This book is the fruit of many years study and contemplation of the identity of Jesus and the evidence for this in the Old and New Testaments and related literature. Its publication coincides with the last official teaching year of a dedicated and brilliant New Testament scholar.

The book is a direct challenge to the current NT orthodoxy that the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation were later reflections on, and articulations of, the feelings engendered by the life and work of Christ, and that these doctrines are not to be found in their full bodied form in the NT. O'Neill spells this out in a clear and concise introduction. What gives his challenge particular force is that he was originally trained as an historian and brings his skills to bear on a subject where sound historical judgement is rare. O'Neill is clear about his task;

"This book is a historian's attempt to defend the truth of the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation. I shall try to show that Jesus, like a number of his fellow Jews at the time, believed God was Three in One and One in Three, and that the eternal Son of God was to be born, or had been born, in order to live a fully human life and to die for the sins of the world. As a