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## Book Reviews

Del Tar

***DOUBLE IMAGE: BIBLICAL INSIGHTS  
FROM AFRICAN PARABLES***

Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1994, 219 pp. Pb  
(Publisher's Address: 997 MacArthur Blvd.,  
Mahwah, NJ 07430)

Del Tarr utilises a parabolic-narrative method of communication, based on the rich oral tradition of West African nations, to teach us a good many things about three important subject areas: (a) some crucial aspects of an African world-view and way of life; (b) corresponding features of a biblical perspective that may be illuminated by an in-depth knowledge of the African world-view; and (c) certain aspects of a Western cultural orientation that may hinder one's understanding and appreciation of either the African or the biblical perspectives.

Tarr has a PhD in cross-cultural communication, is a former long-term missionary to West Africa, and is former President of the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary in the USA. He puts all of his rich scholarly and field-based experience to good use in this book, which provides an excellent anthropological and language-oriented introduction to the field of missiology in general and intercultural, inductive communication in particular.

Tarr's seven major theses of cross cultural communication are each developed and described in a corresponding number of chapters. These may be summarised as follows (based largely on the author's own words): (1) "the filter [or point of view] of an African culture can increase depth, perception and the [concrete] texture of Scripture understanding"; (2) "Western society [and culture], by [its very] nature, obscures certain biblical lessons"; (3) "individualism, [the desire for] equality, [a focus upon the] youth-cult, etc.—though perhaps good North American values—may keep

us from [seeing] some biblical truths": (4) "[we need to] take a step back into the [pre-scientific] world of the Scriptures [in order to better understand the supernatural realm]"; (5) a proper appreciation of "family" and its manifold extended inter-relationships is necessary for a proper biblical hermeneutic; (6) Western "print literacy bias" can lead to a depreciation of the "oral/aural world" of biblical as well as African life-style and system of communication; and (7) the Scripture-preferred mode of presenting a "polarity of ideas helps teach via contrast." – also imagery, symbolism, life-experiences, folk literary forms, personal names, and certain dramatic rhetorical forms (e.g., irony, hyperbole, enigma, paradox).

In addition to the insights that these principles can give us in developing a more balanced, well-rounded strategy of communication and method of biblical interpretation, Tarr uses them also as a gentle means of calling attention to a number of blind spots that have hindered a past (and present?) Western communication of the gospel: an over-emphasis on deductive logic, either-or categorical thought and "systematic" theology, the top-down (clergy-dominated) approach to problem-solving, "success"-achievement orientation (as "confirmed" by statistics, i.e., quantity rather than quality), the ideal of openness and "democracy"; a desire to "control" nature and the environment; competition-driven capitalistic thinking and "goal"-centredness; and a general secularisation, and de-sacralization of life.

Tarr does not "preach" at the reader, he rather effectively teaches more indirectly through his African parables, stories, and anecdotes as these are applied to specific texts of Scripture and the universal problem of our sinful human nature. While it appears that Western missionaries are the primary readership intended for this book, the methods of instruction and Bible applications would also be most helpful to African readers. After reading this book, in fact, they will better understand where their Western colleagues are "coming from" in their various messages and behaviours so that the Africans can in turn shed some light on past and potential problem areas that even today prevent the Word from being properly understood and applied to daily life and thought on the continent.

This book is very well written and easy to read. One could easily go through an entire chapter in one sitting. There are also a number of interesting illustrations to provide pause points along the way, as well as several helpful appendices, namely: a selection of "African words," a general topical index, and a Scripture index. There are only a few endnotes to each chapter, consisting mainly of bibliographic entries. These, it seems to me, were rather too few and need to be supplemented with pertinent references to current works on the various subjects treated, whether anthropological, religious, or biblical in nature.

One could quibble with certain apparent omissions (especially the lack of reference to the actual African language of words cited) or assertions made in the text here and there (e.g., on "man's freedom to choose his own spiritual destiny" [32]; seeming over-tolerance of the practice of sorcery [60]; "animistic" view of African traditional religion [61, 98, 163-4]; the analogy of Christ as man's "elder brother"[120]; and a description of the "ideophone" as mere "onomatopoeia" [glossary]). On the whole, however, my question marks were relatively few and far between.

This fine book is a definite "must" for all missionaries serving (or preparing to serve) in Africa, even those who have been around for a while. There are some noteworthy things likely to be learned about biblical interpretation and intercultural communication. The text could also serve as an introduction to these subjects in theological schools and seminaries continent-wide. Even though the examples, stories, parables, etc. come from West Africa, they can easily be applied or ring a bell in the minds of those who live elsewhere. I can also recommend this book to English-speaking African lay-Christians who are interested in learning more about how an understanding of the basic principles of inductive communication can enhance their understanding of the Bible (especially the discourses of Christ) and can improve their own religious communication, especially where certain barriers are currently being faced (whether ethnic, economic, spiritual, or even political). Whether we are African or expatriate, there will be times in our life of Christian witness when we too, as Tarr puts it, must endeavour to "break through the expectations of the reader's

[hearer's] perceptual world, trying to move the participant into a world of another people and time frame" (196). His book supplies many handy tips along with a general strategy for doing just that. I highly recommend it.

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**Christine A. Mallouhi**  
***WAGING PEACE ON ISLAM***  
London UK: Monarch Books, 2000  
(348 pages, paperback, ISBN: 1 85424 502 3)

If you are looking for a provocative book that challenges all our stereotypes on Islam and Muslims, you could hardly find a more stimulating reading than this book. Mallouhi's treatment of the subject comes across with great passion for Muslim peoples, and captures the reader with compelling language and a wealth of personal insight, based on historical research, devotional studies and lessons learned from life. This should not come as a complete surprise, since the author quite deliberately married into a Muslim family, lived in several Muslim countries in North Africa and the Middle East over extended periods of time, and has visited Muslims in many other countries.

In her book the author presents an empathetic approach to Christian—Muslim interaction throughout history and in today's world. Mallouhi uses Francis of Assisi as a classic example of how it is possible for Christians to relate to Muslims. Throughout the eleven chapters of the book the 'crusader mentality' is set in contrast to the approach of love towards Muslim people exemplified in the author's own life through numerous encounters. Surprisingly, she states: "In over twenty years I never once experienced personal hostility from Muslims over my Christian

faith”(29). Repeatedly, she stresses the importance of meeting Muslims face to face, pleading that “the only way most Muslims will experience Christ’s love for them is through a Christian who cares enough to cross the barrier, and go over to the other side, no matter what the cost” (261). In our efforts to bring Muslims to Christ we should, however, be aware that “if a Muslim is asked to ‘accept Christ’ he does not understand the implication of that cliché. Muslims already accept Christ as an honoured prophet” (282). Therefore “ignorance is [not only] the breeding ground of fear” (75), but will defeat a meaningful communication of the gospel.

Mallouhi is not afraid of exposing Western antagonistic perceptions of Islam, whether they come from the secular media, from one-sided support of the state of Israel or even from evangelical quarters when Islam is ‘targeted’ as the last remaining giant to be defeated. She suggests that “there are a number of beliefs and practices hiding under the banner of spiritual warfare today that are closer to paganism than the Bible” (28).

Unfortunately, these very admirable views and convictions are weakened (in my view) by a number of points that are at best very debatable, if not also at times disturbing and even alarming. One wonders why Muhammad is being portrayed as a gentleman-like character who discussed his beliefs with Jews and Christians alike and respected them (78). Does the author not know, for example, that both *Hadith* and “The Life of the Prophet” (*Sirat-ul Rasul*) also mention dozens of assassinations, and the total expelling of Jewish tribes from Arabia on Muhammad’s explicit directions? Has she deliberately compromised the truth to serve her purpose of presenting Islam in the brightest colours and have the reader “Captured by Islam” (Chapter 10)?

The same question must be raised about her treatment of the Palestinian – Israeli conflict. No doubt there is another side to the story than most of the dominant media would have us believe, but it surely goes beyond giving a fair balance when Mallouhi states: “Palestinians are currently being oppressed in the name of Israel’s God and Christ” (149). Is this a religious conflict between Judaism and Christianity, versus Islam? Surely not. In my opinion this

highlights one of the most serious deficits of the book. Too often it leaves the reader confused by failing to maintain a clear distinction between a Christian response and the common attitude of the West. In another example of this mix-up, Mallouhi first states, that "Since the fall of Communism the West made Islam its new enemy," and then bemoans in the same paragraph that: "The current view of Islam precludes any dialogue or exchange: what does darkness have to offer to light, error to truth, ignorance to knowledge, or Satan to Christ?" (182). This is surely not the sort of question that secular leaders in Europe are asking! Nor at the same time would it be fair to maintain that the Church is not having any dialogue or exchange with Islam.

Some sentiments expressed in the key chapter, "A Muslim Like Me", give such an idealistic picture of the Muslim faith and practice that one finds oneself asking: "Yes, that may be one experience you had, but it is surely not the full picture. Why don't you put it into perspective?" A few examples may illustrate this. During a conversation with some Muslim women in the Gulf states, Mallouhi concludes: "I listened to the women discussing their expectation that their lives lived for God would cause others to desire to follow God more closely. And I thought once again: There's a Muslim just like me." Really? Or in illustrating the impact of the Islamic creed she relates: "The two Catholic nuns living among the Bedouin Muslims [in Morocco], and sharing the same rugged life and fasting with them, turned on their small portable radio at full blast. The hills echoed 'There is no God but God' and abruptly died. Muslims and Catholics then ate together in harmony with what was expressed and in harmony because of what was not expressed." Is this an ideal meant to be emulated or why is it related in these words?

While at no point will one doubt the good intentions or the personal commitment of the author to see Muslims brought into the presence of Jesus Christ through a life and word testimony, many informed readers will find excessive the sentiments expressed on the cover of the book that "the diagnoses in this provocative and challenging book are accurate." The book may indeed be

provocative and challenging, but accuracy surely demands a commitment to a fuller, more broadly balanced assessment.

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**T.D. Alexander and Brian S. Rosner eds.**  
***NEW DICTIONARY OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY***  
Leicester, England and Downers Grove, Illinois, USA:  
Inter-Varsity Press, 2000

The 'New Dictionary of Biblical Theology' is the latest addition to IVP's continually growing list of theological and biblical reference tools. It is a substantial work of over 860 pages, with articles contributed by 125 scholars, mostly from Europe and north America, experts in the areas on which they write. It is divided into three sections. The first contains twelve general essays which look at central issues in biblical theology. In part two there are articles on the theology of the major biblical divisions and also the individual books, and the third and largest section contains articles on biblical themes. At the end of each article there is a bibliography, and the book concludes with an index of articles.

The tripartite division of the work is well conceived and will make it extremely useful to students, teachers and the general reader. The twelve essays in the first part of the book provide a stimulating and useful introduction to the subject of biblical theology as a whole. They cover such areas as the nature of the subject itself, its history and the challenges it faces, the relationship between biblical and systematic theology, unity and diversity in Scripture and relationships between the testaments. The authors interact throughout with contemporary scholarship, provide concise guides through a number of controversies, and defend the subject against those whose approach effectively undermines it. It is also particularly appropriate that there should be an article on preaching



and biblical theology in this section, underlining the fact that biblical theology is not just a subject for the academy but intimately and inseparably related to the proclamation of the church. The second section, *Biblical Corpora and Books*, helpfully brings together brief summaries of the theology of every major section and every book of the Bible. It is of course true that most commentaries summarise the theology of the book they are treating, sometimes at greater length than is found here. However, it is very helpful to have summaries on all the individual books and the principal literary divisions of the Bible within the compass of a single volume.

The conservative evangelical position is maintained throughout the work. Writing on 'Scripture', Schnabel rejects the view that the Bible may be true on questions of 'faith and practice' but err on historical and scientific matters: 'it is not possible to separate matters of faith from matters of history' (page 40). For the most part questions of authorship and the dating of particular books are not addressed, but traditional ascriptions of authorship are sometimes explicitly affirmed. In the article on the Pauline corpus, for example, the authenticity of all thirteen epistles traditionally attributed to Paul is assumed without equivocation. The article on the Pastoral epistles does, somewhat exceptionally, begin with a discussion of their authenticity, which concludes that 'they should not be removed from the orbit of the historical Paul' (page 330). The essential unity of Isaiah is apparently a given - 'recent studies of the book of Isaiah have rediscovered its thematic unity' (page 217) - although the dating of Daniel is not debated, nor the unity of the Pentateuch.

It is good to note the presence of articles on mission, 'an exceedingly important motif pervading virtually the entire course of biblical revelation' (page 663), on prayer and on worship. Turning to other issues, the doctrine of the wrath of God and the propitiatory nature of the work of Christ are both firmly maintained. Blocher insists on the historicity of Adam: 'the biblical view of evil and of salvation hangs upon it' (page 374). On anthropology Johnston argues for a 'holistic dualism' that understands the human person 'as a psychosomatic unity in life, while an immaterial element

continues after death' (page 565). In his articles on Romans and the Pauline letters Moo expresses serious reservations on 'the new perspective on Paul' and supports the traditional Protestant understanding of the doctrine of justification, which is more fully argued by Seifrid in 'Righteousness, justice and justification'. The discussion of gender, 'Man and woman', takes a more conservative approach than that found in some other recent IVP publications: 'Paul nuances the unmistakable equality of man and woman in Christ by preserving male and female sexual identity within the oneness of all in Christ' (page 653). More controversially, in his article on prophecy Wayne Grudem claims that in the New Testament it is the apostle who is equivalent to the Old Testament prophet; by contrast New Testament prophecy is not authoritative and infallible as it is in the Old, nor is it simply 'powerful preaching', but rather 'telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind' (page 707). Moreover, according to Grudem, prophecy in the New Testament has less authority than teaching and has to be tested. He refers readers to other works for an alternative, 'cessationist' view. Johnston's article on hell takes a somewhat equivocal position towards the traditional evangelical understanding of the Bible's teaching on eternal punishment, weighing the alternatives of 'eternal conscious punishment' and 'limited conscious punishment', and referring to a possible compromise solution (pages 543-544). Meanwhile, the discussion of the Sabbath argues that there is 'no theological connection between Sabbath and Sunday .. The Sabbath was a sign .. of this eschatological rest, whereas Sunday is not presented in the NT as a sign of anything, despite its connection to the resurrection' (pages 749-500).

Inevitably the quality of the articles in a dictionary of this sort will vary somewhat from one author to another, and there are some omissions. Thus, for example, there is no article on the millennium, nor is there a cross-reference to indicate where it might be discussed: the article on eschatology contains only a very cursory reference to it, despite the heat generated by the issue over many years. In this connection, the absence of subject and scripture indexes is a significant weakness for a work of this type and does

diminish its usefulness as a research and reference tool. The publishers should consider rectifying this omission in any future edition. Nevertheless, it is a fine book, enormously helpful and stimulating, and containing a wealth of rich information and discussion. It would be of great profit to every thinking Christian who wants to know more of the Scriptures. It is most highly recommended.

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**Daniel I. Block**

***THE GODS OF THE NATIONS***

***Studies in Ancient Near Eastern National Theology***

Grand Rapids, MI / Leicester, England:

Baker Academic and Apollos, 2000

'The Gods of the Nations' is a substantially revised edition of a work first published by Daniel Block in 1988. His object is 'to determine how the relationships that existed between deities and nations were perceived by ancient Near Easterners' (page 19). This in turn enables him to identify the points at which Israelite perceptions were identical with those of their neighbours, and those at which there were fundamental differences. The body of the discussion looks at the origin of deity-nation relations, their expression and termination, and the significance to them of the national territory. Block looks in some detail at the relevant biblical and extra-biblical texts in order to reach his conclusions, which are very helpfully summarised in the final chapter of the book.

Block points out that each of the ancient Near Eastern nations (and also lesser political entities) recognised one particular deity as having jurisdiction over it, including Israel. He makes a basic but key point in the conclusion: it has become apparent that the ancient Israelites' perception of the world, and in particular of political

realities, had much more in common with that of their neighbours, than with our own' (page 149). However, for a number of reasons Israel was also unique among the ancient Near Eastern peoples.

First, in biblical understanding Yahweh had established a relationship with them as a people and not simply as the occupants of a certain territory. Extrabiblical sources suggest that in all other cases deities were 'primarily attached to specific geographic territories and only secondarily concerned with the inhabitants of those areas' (page 32). Accordingly, other ancient Near Eastern nations believed that they were related to their respective deities simply because they happened to live in his/her land. However, the land that Israel occupied was given to them subsequent to their own election, and their relationship with Yahweh did not depend on it but on the fact that he had called them to be his people.

A second fundamental difference between Israel and other ancient Near Eastern peoples lay in the nature of their commitment to their deities. While neighbouring peoples believed they enjoyed a special relationship with a certain god, it was not of an exclusive nature: they felt free to offer worship to other deities in addition to their patrons. However, throughout the Old Testament Yahweh claimed the exclusive allegiance of Israel, which was a notion unique at the time, even though the Old Testament suggests that in practice that claim was constantly threatened by the attractions of alien gods and the syncretism that often resulted.

Third, there was for all nations the possibility that the anger of their deities would lead to catastrophic consequences. Block argues that in this respect ancient Near Eastern nations suffered from extreme insecurity, despite efforts to appease their deities and retain their good favour. The Old Testament shows that Israel similarly feared the consequences of Yahweh's leaving them, but that there were dramatic differences in this regard between them and their neighbours. Most important, they possessed a uniquely clear knowledge of his will and righteous demand, and similarly a unique sense of his presence, all the consequence of divine self-revelation. The gracious nature of his dealings with Israel also distinguished him from other gods: unlike them, he is not capricious, egotistical or self-indulgent.

Finally, while for other peoples national defeat and exile signified the humiliation of their deity and his/her expulsion from the land along with them, this was not so for Israel. Thus in, for example, his discussion of Ezekiel 8-11, Block points out that, even in the moment of catastrophe, Yahweh remains sovereign over his people and over his own destiny too. Nebuchadnezzar does not forcibly drag him from his residence, and his departure did not signify the supremacy of the Babylonian deity. On the contrary, Yahweh is the universal sovereign, and all that happens falls under his jurisdiction: Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians were his agents even in bringing calamity on his own people. This is so because 'the Hebrews alone of all the peoples of the ancient Near East developed a doctrine of monotheism' (page 150). Moreover, given the constant Old Testament stress on the permanent nature of Yahweh's covenant with Israel, the prophets held out hope for the nation beyond the dissolution of the deity-nation-land association in 586.

Block's work is based on detailed and thorough research into the Old Testament and its ancient Near Eastern context. It is a model for students and scholars in its careful and scrupulous analysis, and clarifies a key area of Old Testament history and theology. While not perhaps a vital book on every pastor's or Christian worker's shelves, it certainly merits a place in the library of every theological institution.

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**James C. Miller**  
***The Obedience of Faith,  
the Eschatological People of God,  
and the Purpose of Romans***  
SBL Dissertation Series 177.  
Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000

The enormous influence that Paul's letter to the Romans has had down through the history of Christian thought, on Augustine, Luther, Wesley, and countless others, has been well documented. And major commentaries and monographs continue to appear regularly from respected scholars. Given the attention that has been paid to this document, one might think that there would be nothing new left to say about Romans, that all its puzzles have been solved. But this is far from the truth. One of the prominent unsolved puzzles has even earned a name for itself in recent years. "The Romans Debate" refers to questions concerning Paul's purpose in writing Romans and cognate issues, and is represented by such publications as the well-known collection of essays edited by Karl P. Donfried, *The Romans Debate* (revised edition: Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 1991).

James Miller's *The Obedience of Faith, the Eschatological People of God, and the Purpose of Romans* is among the latest contributions to this Debate. Miller is a senior lecturer in biblical studies at Daystar University in Kenya, and has taught there since 1989. This is his PhD dissertation completed at Union Theological Seminary (Richmond, VA), and published in the Society of Biblical Literature's Dissertation Series. Miller suggests a coherent solution to the "Romans Debate", which attempts to explain the entire letter along with the historical context of the Roman Christians.

Those who work in NT studies will want to take note of this study, not only for the fresh solutions it offers, but also because Miller provides the uninitiated with handy orientation to the current debate on Romans. Since publication of his dissertation, Miller has also now contributed the authoritative update on the

Debate itself, in his "The Romans Debate: 1991-2001" Currents in Research: *Biblical Studies* 9 (2001) 306-49.

Miller's first chapter is given over to defining the problem: "How does one unite the information found in the frame of the letter with the particular contents of the body, in such a way that it provides a rationale for why Paul wrote about these specific issues (and not others) to these particular Christians at this time in his ministry?" (p. 5). Miller's contention is that previous solutions to this problem have failed because they either ignore the body and/or frame of the letter, or fail to account properly for its varied contents. A coherent solution to the purpose of Romans should take Paul's own assertions in the frame of his letter seriously, and should show how this ties in with what Paul writes in the body of the letter. It should also account for what we know about the Roman Christians and their relationship with Paul, as well as developments in Paul's ministry.

Miller's thesis is that Paul wrote this letter to shape "a community of the new age"-which Miller also terms the "eschatological people of God" (as in the title of the book). To achieve this, Paul attempts to "strengthen the Roman Christians' adherence to his interpretation of the gospel" by "describing how that gospel should work itself out in the life of the community" (p. 18). The book recognises that this aim is determined by a number of different factors-Paul's missionary plans, his impending visit to Jerusalem, potential division in the Roman church-but argues that these various factors do not necessarily mean that Paul had to have multiple aims in view when he wrote.

To demonstrate his thesis, Miller begins in Chapter 2 by examining the frame of the letter for clues. Passages such as 1:11-15 and 15:15 are viewed as important explanations from Paul on the purpose of his letter. Building on the idea of the "apostolic *parousia*" mediated through Paul's letters, Miller argues that Paul's "reminder" to the Roman believers serves to establish his apostolic authority amongst them. It is his apostolic calling that lies behind this thread that runs through the entire letter. Paul's statement in 1:5 is scrutinised (along with 15:18 and 16:6) to show how the parallel theme of "obedience" runs right through Romans and

provides the impetus for Paul's mission. As apostle to the Gentiles, Paul called the Roman Christians to an obedience that belonged to the *eschaton*. This obedience would manifest itself as Gentiles and Jews joined in the common worship of the one true God.

Next Miller expounds 15:7-13 (Chapter 3), arguing that this section functions as a summary and conclusion of everything that has come before. Paul returns to many of the key themes found in chs. 1-11: "the character of God expressed in saving action", the recipients of this action, the response to this action, and "the witness of Scripture to all the above" (p.79).

These themes serve to join 15:7-13 with chs. 1-11. Miller's argument for this section as a summary of chs. 12-13 does not convince, although he does return to this passage in Chapter 6. The connection between 15:7-13 and 14:1-15:6 is clear, but Miller shows that 15:7f. is more than a simple restatement of 14:1-15:6. Paul's exhortation for the Romans to "receive one another" is broadened to include not only the "strong" and the "weak", but the entire community. This is the "obedience of faith" that lies at the core of Paul's apostolic calling: the "eschatological people of God" consists of Jew and Gentile united in common worship and "receiving one another" in a manner that brings glory to God (p. 94). Chapters 2 and 3 successfully explain the frame of the letter as well as a large section of the body.

However, a successful solution to the Romans Debate must also account for the letter in the context of Paul's life and ministry, and that of the Christians in Rome.

Chapters 4 and 5 summarise what is known about Paul, his audience and potential opponents. In Chapter 4 the author rehearses the evidence that Romans was written from Corinth as Paul prepared to make his way to Jerusalem with the collection from the Gentile churches. After delivering the collection he hoped to travel to Spain via Rome. There are indications that, even though he had never visited Rome, Paul knew something of the Roman Christians and that they possibly knew something of him. The following chapter argues that "Paul's controversies in the East revolve[d] around what God had done in Christ for the people of God" (p. 150). Paul's defence of the gospel in chs. 1-11 follows



similar lines to those in Galatians and Philippians and indicates that the questions raised, e.g. 3:8, were not merely rhetorical devices, but were possible accusations from real opponents who, Paul expected, would arrive in Rome before he could. This reconstruction explains 15:31 and 16:17-20a, passages which seem almost paranoiac if there was no real opposition to Paul's gospel.

In keeping with the criterion of explaining that content of the letter in terms of Paul's purpose or aim, Miller argues in Chapter 6 that 12:1-15:6 focuses on relationships between members of the Christian community in Rome.

The flow of thought in this section is explained as moving from general principles to the specific application of those principles in the context of tension between the "weak" and the "strong." While 12:9-21 and 13:1-7 sit uncomfortably in this scheme Miller shows how these two sections might be read with reference to community relationships. As he himself acknowledges, there is insufficient evidence to maintain this position with any certainty, although it must be considered a possibility, especially if the coherence of the letter is taken as a starting point.

The book closes with a useful summary of Miller's conclusions and an appendix in which 16:25-27 is defended as authentic.

*The Obedience of Faith, the Eschatological People of God, and the Purpose of Romans* is a welcome contribution to the Romans Debate which succeeds in advancing the discussion along fruitful lines of enquiry. Miller's introduction and footnotes will also prove a useful guide to the Debate as a whole.

When faced with what seems to be a host of conflicting data and the need to reconstruct the background of a New Testament letter, some scholars are tempted to suggest that a variety of purposes and aims are present. While this possibility should not be ruled out a priori, it remains a dangerous approach. A complex set of data can always be described, given enough variables. Ockham reminds us, though, that the truth is often seen most clearly when we reduce the number of variables as far as possible.

The strength of Miller's work lies in its simple explanation of the "data" of Romans, without minimising the complex historical issues underlying it.

Even if future research might cause certain parts of this thesis to be re-examined, Miller has provided criteria which any solution needs to meet and has shown how the problem can be addressed coherently.

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