

patristic testimony, the priority of Matthew, and some literary interaction among the three synoptics). Dogmatism by anyone concerning the origins of the synoptics and possible interdependence should be recognized for what it is. The most that can be hoped for is more or less credible scenarios. The editors appear to forget that their scenarios are also subject to historical uncertainty (pp. 211-12).

Some evangelical scholars quoted in the book have made statements that do sound as if they believe the gospel writers added material that did not happen or words Jesus did not actually speak (pp. 320-21). This is unfortunate, but rather than discarding these tools, the results of the use of criticism should be couched in terms in agreement with evangelical understanding of the truthfulness and inspiration of the entire Bible.

The reader of this book must also realize that the mindset of critics who have traditionally used historical critical methods is quite different from the mindset of the typical American evangelical and fundamentalist. For these critics, the connection between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith is nebulous at least, unnecessary at most. Because it does not matter for the faith of the Christian whether Jesus said and did what was recorded in the gospels, critics were free to use these tools in ways that evangelicals and fundamentalists perceive as destructive to the historical accuracy of the Bible, without which our faith cannot stand. When this distinction is kept in mind, then the general criticism of this book is valid, and evangelical scholars would do well to exercise great care in how they use these tools. It is another question whether or not the tools are *necessarily* tainted beyond salvaging.

It is simplistic to treat any widely held theory as if it had no validity or supporting evidence, yet that is how this book handles historical critical methods. It is most helpful if read alongside other materials to provide a balanced view and a better understanding of the complexity of the issues. This book is not the last voice; it is only one voice in the continuing debate over the origins of and relationships among the Synoptic Gospels.

Stephen T. Pegler
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

Richard B. Hays. *First Corinthians*. IBC. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1997. xiv+299 pp. \$24.00.

This commentary of Richard B. Hays (The Divinity School, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina) fulfills in an excellent way the aims of the series in which it is published (*Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*).

The commentary has a clear structure displayed not only in the Table of Contents, but also under the heading "Outline of the Letter" (pp. 13f.). It is worth noting that the former gives a fuller list of subsections than the latter. Hays accepts the rhetorical arguments of Margaret Mitchell in favor of reading the letter as a "unified whole" (leaving open the possibility that scribes "may have introduced alterations and additions" to the text of Paul [p. 9]). Accordingly, he divides the letter into a few large parts, of which three cover the main bulk of the letter. These parts are then divided into sections and the sections further into pericopes. The title of each of these is already a good summary of the content. For example, 6:1-11 is headed by

the inscription: "Legal Disputes Should Be Handled Within the Community" (p. 92). The titles are in understandable language. "Knowledge Puffs Up, But Love Builds Up" (8:1-13) (p. 136) carries on in the tradition of the KJV, "knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth." But he also uses colloquial language in a telling way: "Hairstyles and Gender Distinctions" (11:2-16) (p. 182).

There are extra sections entitled "Reflections for Teachers and Preachers" at the end of most of the pericopes and always at the end of sections. These are not only excellent summaries of the main content of the relevant passages, but they also call the attention of teachers and preachers to some consequences if the text is to be expounded today. One example may suffice. After the exposition of the Lord's Supper, Hays draws one of the consequences in these clear words:

As long as some Christians go hungry, the Lord's Supper should call the prosperous to share their bread with those in need. This is a challenging word indeed for Christians who live in the affluent societies of North America and Europe. . . . Pastors and teachers should work patiently to enable their congregations to understand the Eucharist not just as a private act of piety focused on receiving individual forgiveness but as a coming together of the Lord's people at a common meal. (p. 204)

Hays founds his commentary on thorough exegesis. The "literature cited" shows that he is acquainted with the most recent exegetical works, for example Wolfgang Schrage's German commentary in the *EKK* series (of which vol. 3 was unfortunately not yet published at the time of the printing of Hays's work). The bibliography in general reflects Hays's interest in the social background of the Corinthian correspondence. This aspect of research—coming more and more to the front in NT studies in general—is applied to 1 Corinthians in a most appropriate way, since the very subject of the letter calls for this kind of interpretation (see e.g., Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1982], referred to on p. 24 in Hays's commentary).

The introduction (pp. 1-13) deals with usual matters, and it also presents a short summary of theological issues raised by the letter. The problem of relating an ancient document to the present life of Christians is discussed. Hays offers the following hermeneutical solution: "we must be alert to discovering imaginative *analogies* between the world of the letter and the world we inhabit" (p. 1, italics his). Although this is a fair proposal, and it is honest to claim that the commentator presents "one reading" among several possible ones, perhaps it is going too far to state that Paul "was not aiming to write timeless truth or even a general theological treatise" (p. 1). One might argue that although the letter has a concrete original setting, addressing the problems of one particular church in the first century, Paul nevertheless wrote with a high claim of authority. He can, for example, write concerning one concrete matter: "This is my rule in all the churches" (1 Cor 7:17). In the very chapter where he emphasizes the difference between the authority of the Lord and that of his own, he also claims that he has the Spirit of God (1 Cor 7:40; see also v. 25). One could argue that when an apostle gives a "ruling" in a concrete matter, he may also expect that more people will learn from it than the members of one particular congregation

(see also Col 4:16 for the likelihood that apostolic letters were expected to be circulated).

Hays's knowledge on the background of the letter is informed by ancient writers as well as recent scholarship. Thus, for example, he rightly calls attention to Strabo's *Geography* (7 B.C.E.), also mentioning the significant fact that Strabo's data apply to the "older" Corinth, prior to the city's being reestablished as a Roman colony in 44 B.C.E. (pp. 3-4).

Among the general introductory matters Hays might profitably have given a little more attention to the question of integrity. Hays's working hypothesis, mentioned above, that the letter by and large was written on one occasion by Paul, can certainly be accepted as a possibility, as he is able to base a logically built up commentary on it. However, he could have mentioned alternative possibilities, for example that of David Trobisch (*Paul's Letter Collection* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994]), who argues that we do not need to postulate lost letters in Paul's Corinthian correspondence; rather, there are several letters pasted together to make up 1 Corinthians (see especially pp. 73-80 in Trobisch's work, where he argues that three consecutive letters of Paul make up our present 1 Corinthians). The concluding pages of Johannes Weiss's introduction to his commentary on 1 Corinthians still give us food for thought. However, Hays does raise the possibility that 2 Cor 6:14-7:1—seen as an interpolation by many commentators—might represent a fragment of a lost letter referred to in 1 Cor 5:9 (p. 5).

Hays draws on works based on archaeological evidence when he points to the likelihood that a house—where the first Christians usually gathered—could accommodate "no more than thirty to fifty people for the common meal" (p. 6). Thus it is likely that in Corinth we can postulate the existence of "several separate house church gatherings" (p. 6), which may provide the background of the factions within the community (p. 7). This possibility should also caution us not to build up a theology of the community, since it is not certain that, for example, the people who said that "it is a good thing for a man not to touch a woman" were the same as those who denied the resurrection of the dead (p. 8). It is rightly emphasized that, for example, "it is doubtful that the Corinthians thought of themselves as promulgating a 'realized eschatology'" (p. 8; see also Hays's recent article in *NTS* 45 (1999): 391-412, on some relevant passages of 1 Corinthians). On the other hand, it is excellently pointed out—not only in the introduction, but at the relevant passages throughout the commentary—that Paul diagnoses and frames everyday issues in theological terms.

There are helpful lists of points in the introduction as regards theological themes in the letter and focal points of the commentary. The former include: Christology; apocalyptic eschatology; embodied existence; the primacy of love; the transformation of power and status through the Cross. Hays's additional observations relate to the following themes: Paul's pastoral task: community formation; conversion of the imagination; the social location of theological thinking; Paul as hermeneutic theologian; Paul as model for ministry (pp. 9-13).

Having mentioned some parts from the beginning and from the end of Hays's book, I now turn to some of his exegetical arguments and his suggestions concerning practical application in the commentary proper. I cannot do more than give a sample of the breadth of thought expressed in this commentary; my aim is simply to whet the appetite of readers of this review and to encourage them to work through the commentary alone or

with a group (just as I had the joy of working through parts of it in a university course for training pastors).

In the "Salutation" of the letter (1:1-3) it is pointed out that the term *hagioi*, "saints," should be understood against the OT (Septuagint) usage of the word: "when Paul applies this language to the Corinthians, he is echoing God's call to Israel" (p. 16). Thus here, and many other times in the letter, the Christians at Corinth—a predominantly Gentile group—are implicitly addressed "as members of the covenant people of God" (p. 16). This phenomenon corresponds to the frequent allusions to and interpretations of OT texts also in this letter (see e.g., p. 34)—to which matter the commentary gives particular attention (p. 12). It should be noted, however, that even if we can accept that Paul had the longer contexts of his OT quotations in mind (as Hays confidently affirms in a concrete case on p. 29), it remains an open question whether the Corinthians themselves would recall those fuller Septuagint texts.

From the section on "Thanksgiving" (1:4-9) we may highlight the exegetical care which is there devoted to every point requiring commentary. The exegetical discussions are not always presented in full detail—because this is not an aim of the series, but they are always presupposed, or mentioned at least in brief. Thus, for example, Hays rightly tells the reader in brackets that the term usually translated as "in Christ," can be translated as "by Christ" (p. 17, italics his).

The first main part of the letter is entitled in the commentary, "A Call for Unity in the Community" (1:10-4:21). The idea of fellowship is a recurring theme throughout the letter (see also p. 19). Paul's call to unity is a fundamental theme (p. 21). Hays's exegetical views, more fully worked out elsewhere, are there in the background of his exposition of the whole letter, even if only implicitly. For example, Hays takes a clear stand against the thesis of F. C. Baur (without burdening the reader with naming him and his theory, p. 22):

The divisions at Corinth should not necessarily be understood to be clearly organized parties. The evidence of the letter as a whole suggests rather that there are inchoate dissensions and arguments brewing. . . . Despite many scholarly speculations, it is not possible to assign a distinct ideological program to each of these factions. Indeed, Paul's remarks here suggest that the emergent factions may be created more by personal allegiance to particular leaders than by clearly defined theological differences.

In this first part of the commentary there is a section that has an important message for both Protestant and Catholic churches. The section on Paul's building metaphor is entitled "Our Construction Work Will Be Tested by Fire" (3:10-15) (p. 53). Hays emphasizes that here Paul's metaphors refer "to the community viewed *corporately*: the building that is built by the apostles and tested by fire is not the spiritual life of the individual believer, but the church community as a whole" (p. 51). This is a necessary corrective to an individualistic reading by some Protestant congregations. On the other hand, it is also rightly emphasized that Paul is not talking here "about purgatory for individual souls" (p. 55). The image of judgment by fire is not applied by Paul to persons, but to works; it is not applied "to the fate of individuals but to the ecclesiological construction work done by different church leaders."

The second main part of the letter is entitled by Hays, "A Call for Community Discipline" (5:1-6:20). It is worth noting that the carefully selected bibliography includes not only commentaries but also monographs that are relevant to certain sections of the letter (see e.g., Brian Rosner's dissertation, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics: A Study of 1 Corinthians 5-7* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994]). Hays emphasizes that in reading this part of the letter it is important to note that the predominantly Gentile converts of the Corinthian church "bear the same moral responsibilities given to Israel in Scripture" (p. 80). When Paul remarks concerning a sexual misconduct found among the Corinthian Christians that it is "of a kind that is not found even among the Gentiles" (5:1), Hays observes that Paul's use of the term "'Gentiles' (i.e., non-Jews) . . . offers a fascinating hint that he thinks of the Gentile converts at Corinth as Gentiles no longer (cf. 12:2, 13)" (p. 81).

It is also worth mentioning here—and this is a strength of the commentary at other places as well—that although the reader is not expected to know Greek, he or she is given all the main translation possibilities. For example, in 5:4 the expression "in the name of the Lord Jesus" can belong to more than one part of the sentence. It may refer to Paul's judgment pronounced in the name . . . ; or to the man "who has done such thing in the name . . ."—a possibility that would fit with the hypothesis that some Corinthians were boasting of their spiritual eminence and freedom; or (less likely) to the congregation assembled in the name of the Lord (p. 84).

The longest part is entitled "Responses to Contested Issues in Corinth" (7:1-15:58). It is very helpful that, before the detailed exposition of chap. 7, some findings of the commentator are summarized in advance to help "to clear away many misconceptions" as regards Paul's discussion of sex and marriage (p. 111). For example: "Paul is not writing a general treatise on marriage" (p. 111); nothing indicates in this passage "that sexual intercourse within marriage is sinful" according to Paul (p. 112); the apostle's advice "is strongly conditioned by his belief that the day of the Lord is coming very soon." Although Hays draws from this latter point the conclusion that Paul's simple rule may be summarized as "Do not try to change your position" (p. 123), he nevertheless holds that in 7:21b the notoriously difficult sentence should be translated as an exception: ". . . but if a chance of liberty should come, take it" (p. 125; this being one of the passages where Hays does not accept the main text of NRSV, which he otherwise adopts for his commentary).

The commentary presents the possible lines of interpretation in a fair way throughout, and yet also displays the author's own exegetical decisions. A good example of this is the discussion of a passage that has evoked controversy among interpreters, particularly in more recent decades. Verses 14:34-35 (there is a misprint in the title on p. 245) are called by Hays an "Excursus." He argues that these verses are an interpolation; they are "best explained as a gloss introduced into the text by the second- or third-generation Pauline interpreters who compiled the pastoral epistles" (p. 247). Hays argues this case not only on the basis of the similarity to 1 Tim 2:11-12 and on grounds of the textual variants (these verses occurring in some manuscripts at the end of the chapter), but also on the seeming contradiction with 11:2-16, where (especially in v. 5) Paul naturally affirms that women pray and prophesy in the congregation. It has to be noted that Hays presents in a fair way several interpretations that regard 14:34-35 as belonging originally to Paul's letter. One wonders why Hays does not

entertain the possibility that, once the reader knows Paul's opinion on the matter from chap. 11, then the reader could be expected to take chap. 14 in the light of the former chapter. In that case, 14:34-35 cannot be a general rule, and some other explanation is required. If so, then the best option seems to be a meaning that fits the close context of chap. 14. Perhaps this is a restricted ban on any way of speaking that is against the "order" of the congregation (v. 40). Hays himself refers to some interpreters who are not far from this view when they hold that Paul "is addressing a specific local problem at Corinth and restricting certain *kinds* of disruptive speech, such as chattering and asking questions (v.35a)," (p. 247, italics his). Whatever the true solution, Hays ends with some most helpful remarks. He writes, "Nonetheless, the passage remains in our Bibles, even if we think it is an interpolation" (p. 248). He advises teachers and preachers "to encourage the congregation to develop a more nuanced view of the authority and diversity of the canon." I would add that, if the text in question does not have to be seen as an example of "internal tension," this may be a further argument for keeping open the possibility that there is a basic unity in the theology of the NT.

To sum up, Professor Hays has written a carefully argued commentary that is full of fresh exegetical observations presented in a way that will be fully comprehensible to future expositors of 1 Corinthians. At the same time he summarizes the best of the older and the more recent scholarly work on this letter, a letter that has so much to teach congregations in our day.

Peter Balla
Károli Gáspár Reformed University
Budapest, Hungary

Robert H. Mounce. *The Book of Revelation*. Rev. ed. NICNT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999. xxxvi + 439 pp. \$30.80.

G. K. Beale. *The Book of Revelation*. NIGTC. Grand Rapids/Carlisle: Eerdmans/Paternoster, 1999. lxiv + 1245 pp. \$52.50.

A helicopter view of noteworthy wider evangelical commentary publishing on the Apocalypse in the 1990s presents something less than a picture of balance. Viewed as to bulk, at one end of the pendulum swing are slender works, such as those of Talbert and Michaels. At the other extreme are the true mega-commentaries, particularly Thomas's two and Aune's three volumes. For whatever reason, there hasn't been a lot in between, size-wise. Viewed as to approach/content, on one flank is Thomas's workmanlike, extended dispensational treatment. Way out on the other flank is Aune's sometimes speculative "massive ("magnum" would be, at best, a "double-minded" descriptor to attach to Aune's brilliant, but foundationally flawed, work) opus." Again, there hasn't been much middle ground.

Fortunately, the two latest Revelation commentaries released can be characterized as more balanced in various meaningful ways. One (Mounce) is a revision of a well-received older work, seeking to build upon its earlier success. In the evangelical publishing context sketched above, though, Mounce's volume also fills the void of "middle-sized" commentaries. The other (Beale) is a new work, but one creatively retooling an older viewpoint.