

point into scholarship on Philippians. Harmon's commentary may not have the novelty of Fee or Fowl or the comprehensiveness (and virtual unreadability) of Reumann, but it is a solid, well-researched commentary that should stand among the primary commentaries on Philippians for many readers.

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The Last Years of Paul: Essays from the Tarragona Conference, June 2013. Edited by Armand Puig i Tàrrach, John M. G. Barclay, and Jörg Frey. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 352. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015, ix + 608 pp., €164.00.

This substantive volume contains essays from the Congress on "The Last Years of Paul's Life," which convened in Tarragona, Spain, in June 2013. While the various contributors do not always agree with one another, the scholarship in this volume is often nothing short of breathtaking. In a day when the definition of "scholarship" is often diluted, including popular or semi-popular-level work, here is a volume that sets an incredibly high standard of what true scholarship is all about. In particular, this means thorough, even exhaustive, engagement with the primary sources, which as a result makes a genuine contribution to the field of knowledge in a given area, in the present case the last years of Paul.

I became aware of this volume when completing work on a commentary on the letters to Timothy and Titus for the Biblical Theology for Christian Proclamation series. While not contributing greatly to the biblical-theological dimension of these letters (with Wright's essay serving as a notable exception, see below), the present volume does shed important light on several historical questions related to Paul's final years and thus to the circumstances surrounding the writing of 1–2 Timothy and Titus.

One of the editors, John Barclay, opens the volume by masterfully summarizing what we know and do not know about Paul's final years (pp. 1–14). Barclay's essay is an example of mining the primary sources for all the relevant information and attempting to put the evidence together into a coherent hypothesis like the pieces of a puzzle. That said, I do not find Barclay's solution to the problem of Paul's final years compelling, namely, that "Paul was convicted and executed perhaps in 62 CE, either for *seditio* or for *maiestas* in relation to the emperor" (p. 13). According to Barclay, Paul's mission ended in disaster: his "Gentile mission had not been completed in its extension to Spain, his churches were not recognized by Jerusalem, and Israel was further from, not nearer to, faith in Christ" (*ibid.*). Paul's final years, so Barclay, could thus be classified as "a saga of disappointment and failure" (p. 14), and the "last years of Paul were peculiarly traumatic, and many projects that he had hoped would come to fruition fell dramatically apart" (*ibid.*).

Barclay realizes that his thesis is "deliberately provocative" (*ibid.*). In fact, the remainder of the volume is characterized by considerable diversity of opinions and theories regarding Paul's final years. On the one extreme is Romano Penna ("The

Death of Paul in the Year 58: A Hypothesis and Its Consequences for His Biography,” pp. 533–52), who proposes that Paul was martyred as early as AD 58. As Rainer Riesner (“Paul’s Trial and End according to Second Timothy, 1 Clement, the Canon Muratori, and the Apocryphal Acts”) documents (p. 407), most other scholars date Paul’s martyrdom anywhere between the years 62 and 68 (Riesner himself favors 63 or 64).

Rather than providing brief summaries of every essay, I have chosen in the remainder of this review to focus on a few key contributions and to treat them in greater detail. Easily the most fascinating and theologically fruitful essay in the entire volume is N. T. Wright’s “Paul’s Western Missionary Project: Jerusalem, Rome, Spain in Historical and Theological Perspective” (pp. 49–66). In vintage fashion, Wright provides a veritable theologico-historical *tour de force* in probing the missionary strategy Paul pursued in his final years. Interestingly, Wright locates Paul’s motivation in “Jewish apocalyptic,” understood not as pertaining narrowly to the end of the world but as a broad “strategy for both narrating and living the counter-imperial story in which Israel’s God, the creator, dethrones the present world rulers and exalts a messianic figure in their place” (p. 53). In Christ, a “new moment” had come, which constituted “the long-awaited fulfilment of ancient prophecies and promises,” ensuing, in keeping with prophecies such as those found in Daniel 2 and 7, “after a historical sequence characterized by a succession of world empires” in the “fullness of time” (Gal 4:4; p. 54). As an “apocalyptic thinker,” Paul espoused an eschatology “rethought around Jesus as Israel’s Messiah and around the fresh gift of the divine spirit,” which “necessarily involved an important though oblique confrontation with the last great world empire, that of Rome” (ibid.).

“If we want to understand what Paul thought he was called to do in the last years of his life,” Wright contends, “we need to place his vision of creation renewed in fulfilment of the Abrahamic promises and under the sovereignty of Israel’s Messiah at its heart” (p. 57). This, in turn, involves understanding Paul’s statement regarding a future mission to Spain in Rom 15:24, 28 in the buildup to this passage in the book of Romans. In Rom 4:13, Paul affirms that God’s promise to Abraham and his offspring pertained to their inheritance of *the world*, not merely geographical territory in the Middle East. In keeping with the universal rule promised the future Davidic king and the OT vision of glory (i.e. sovereignty) being given to him over all creation (Psalm 8), Paul, in Romans 8, shows the retold exodus story coming to a climax. This fleshes out Paul’s gospel, which he understood to be not merely about Jewish restoration but about the redemption and renewal of creation. Thus the gospel is not merely about justification by faith but also about the announcement of the universal lordship of Jesus Christ, the long-awaited Messiah who had now come, died an atoning death, and risen triumphantly. Paul’s argument climaxes in Rom 15:7–13, which, in turn, lays the foundation for Paul’s missionary strategy enunciated in verses 14–32. What is instrumental to this strategy is Paul’s self-designation, unique to the letters to Timothy and Titus, of being a herald (*κῆρυξ*; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11) whose role was to make an initial announcement (cf. *εὐαγγέλιον* word group in Isa 40:9; 52:7). In this vein, Paul conceived of his mission in terms of announcing “Jesus as Messiah and Lord *across the key parts of Caesar’s*

empire” (p. 61). Thus, having made initial proclamation in Asia, Macedonia, Achaëa, and Illyricum, Paul intended to proceed to make initial proclamation of Jesus’s lordship at the end of Caesar’s earth, Spain.

With regard to painstaking historical research, first prize may go to John Granger Cook (“Roman Penalties Regarding Roman Citizens Convicted of Heavy Charges in I CE,” pp. 271–303), though there are other noteworthy essays featuring extensive engagement with primary sources (e.g. Valerio Marotta, “St. Paul’s Death: Roman Citizenship and *summa supplicia*,” pp. 248–70). On pp. 288–303 of his essay, Cook provides a detailed table listing Roman citizens sentenced to execution in the first century AD, including information on the reigning Roman emperor, the judge, the defendant, the charge, and the sentence. Particularly relevant for the study of Paul’s final years is the information provided on pp. 298–99 detailing other known executions under Emperor Nero. Based on primary sources such as Tacitus’s *Annals*, we are told of 15 executions that were ordered during Nero’s reign on the grounds of alleged crimes such as conspiracy, sedition, and other charges, resulting in exile, forced suicide, crucifixion, or decapitation. Thus in AD 65, with Nero presiding as the judge, Subrius Flavius, tribune of the Praetorian Guard, was sentenced for conspiracy to be executed by a tribune, and his head was severed with two blows (Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.67.4). This kind of background information provides significant validation for the traditional testimony according to which Paul was beheaded under Nero.

Sparks fly in a pointed interchange between Rainer Riesner (“Paul’s Trial and End,” pp. 391–410) and Jens Herzer (“The Mission and the End of Paul between Strategy and Reality: A Response to Rainer Riesner,” pp. 411–32). Among other things, Riesner contends that Luke served as redactor of the letters to Timothy and Titus as vol. 3 of Luke-Acts, redacting 2 Timothy shortly after Paul’s death as his spiritual testament with the use of personal memories and some written material by the apostle. In response to Riesner’s highly conjectural reconstruction of Paul’s final years, Herzer assigns Riesner’s contribution to the genre of *Vermutungswissenschaft* (“guesswork”; Martin Hengel’s term). I largely agree with Herzer’s critique of Riesner’s rather idiosyncratic reconstruction. Herzer’s own (cautious) summary has it that Paul was unable to embark on his mission to Spain and that “he died under unknown circumstances in Rome during the reign of Nero” (p. 431).

These brief soundings from representative essays in this first-rate collection are no substitute for a careful reading of the essays themselves. No scholar working in Pauline studies, including the letters to Timothy and Titus, can afford to neglect this volume. While the conclusions reached by the individual contributors are highly diverse, in its thoroughgoing engagement with the primary evidence the volume sets a very high standard for scholarship that those of us who write commentaries and other derivative works will do well to emulate.

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