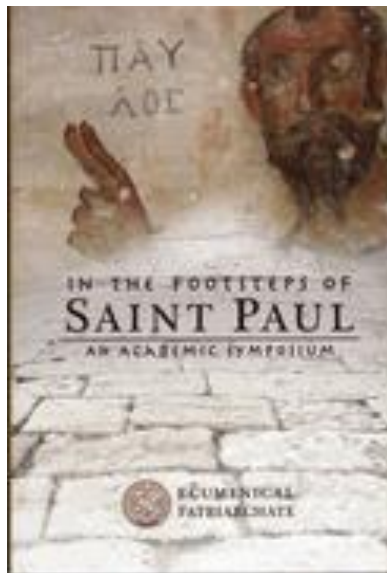


Archbishop Demetrius Traktellis, Rev. John Chryssavgis (Eds.)



In the Footsteps of St. Paul: An Academic Symposium

Papers presented at the Pauline Symposium October 11-16 2008, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline, Massachusetts 2011, ISBN 978-1-935317-13-5 , 240 pp.

Reviewed by Alexandru Ioniță

This The number of Pauline studies among Eastern Orthodox authors is rather small compared to the western Biblical scholarship dedicated to the writings of the Apostle. Bridging this gap to some extent, the present volume publishes a collection of papers presented at the Pauline Symposium organised and sponsored by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople 11-16 October 2008, within the context of the Year dedicated to St. Paul.

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The main body of the volume, structured in three parts, is preceded by three introductory statements (a preface, a foreword and an introduction) and is followed by three appendices, making manifest the preference shared by many Orthodox for the number three. The preface, written by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, expresses his appreciation for the Pauline Symposium as a unique event in the history of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which provided the opportunity for the extraordinary Synaxis (Council) of the Heads of the Orthodox Church throughout the world, held before the symposium on 10-11 October.

The foreword and the introduction, written respectively by the two editors of the volume, Archbishop Demetrius Trakatellis and The Reverend John Chryssavgis, welcomed participants from different Christian backgrounds to the symposium, being “inter-Christian and international in nature”¹. It also had a pan-orthodox² character through the presence of the heads of all autocephalous Orthodox Churches.

The first part of the volume “St Paul and His Times” begins with the address of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew which commenced the symposium. In his opening remarks, the Patriarch underlines the role of St Paul as a “mediator and bridge”, “uniting earth and heaven, time and eternity, matter and spirit, male and female, East and West” (p. 5). It is interesting, from the point of view of the dialogue between Orthodox and Christians of other confessions, to note the way in which the Ecumenical Patriarch addresses his audience, which is composed, as noted above, of theologians and churchmen of different Christian backgrounds. He addresses them as “beloved theologians of the Church” (p. 4), and “esteemed theologians of the churches of God” (p. 7).

The first part continues with an address by Archbishop Demetrius Trakatellis, followed by the first scholarly contribution, *Christ in You, the Hope of Glory (Col. 1:27): Eschatology in St. Paul*, written by the Anglican bishop N. T. Wright. Taking Col. 1:27 as a starting point, Wright’s paper contains a comprehensive study on the Pauline eschatology. Wright builds on the understanding of eschatology within Second Temple Judaism, in

¹ Speakers included scholars from diverse Christian confessions, such as the Anglican Bishop N. T. Wright of Durham, Prof. Brian E. Daley S. J., Prof. Karl P. Donfried (Lutheran), Prof. Helmut Koester (Lutheran), and Prof. Turid Karlsen Seim (Lutheran).

² At the symposium, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew was joined by the Patriarch of Alexandria, the Archbishop of Cyprus, of Athens, of Albania, of Prague, and of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, together with representatives from every autocephalous and autonomous church, including the Patriarchates of Antioch, Jerusalem, Moscow, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Georgia, as well as the Churches of Poland, Finland, and Estonia. The Roman Catholic Church was represented throughout by personal delegates of Pope Benedict XVI.

order to show how Paul has reworked this Jewish eschatology around his freshly coined Trinitarian theology.

The main conclusion of Wright's paper is that a deeper understanding of the Jewish roots of Paul's thinking reveals a double eschatological fulfillment: "the mystery of Jesus Christ, for Paul, is that in him is revealed not only the glory of the one creator God, but the true glory of humankind, lost at the fall" (p. 25). Wright insists on the idea that the Apostle saw the link between "the glory of God" and "the true glory of humankind" expressed through the Jewish concept of *Shekinah*, surpassing the long hope of Israel that God's glory would dwell in the renewed Temple. For St. Paul, the Temple is Christ himself. Moreover, "not only Jesus is the Temple, but also the Church" (p. 27). Wright considers that the key to interpreting the writings of the Apostle Paul has to be found in pneumatology, which far too often is ignored by exegetes, due to a "typical Protestant unwillingness to contemplate an ecclesiology as high as Paul's" (p. 27). The result is a cosmic eschatology of future glory anticipated in the fact of the Church.

If the argument so far seems to be well known and, for the Orthodox, a confirmation of the Eastern perspective on eschatology and ecclesiology, Wright concludes his paper by drawing attention to the ever present danger of Church triumphalism (p. 29). He notes that the Church is indeed the fulfillment of God's promises to the people of Israel, in which the eschatology of God's glory is actualised, but "it is emphatically not yet completed, and stands in enormous tension with the continuing realities of present existence" (p. 29). This tension and present suffering will be abolished only at the second coming of Christ in glory (p. 31). Although Wright glosses over the problem of Israel's unbelief in Paul's letters, his argument suggests indirectly that the problem should refer us once again to the importance of Christ's second coming in the Pauline theology and at the same time, it should make evident the necessity of abandoning triumphalist vision of the Church.

The next paper, *The Apostle Paul's Message: Theological Bridge Between East and West*, written by Prof Ioannis Karavidopoulos expands on the importance of Paul's message as a mediator between East and West. One of the most significant contributions of this study is perhaps Karavidopoulos' account of his bibliographical statistics on Greek biblical scholarship over the last century. His analysis shows a preference for Pauline theology and St. Paul, especially in the post-World - War - II period (p. 38). Among other common remarks, the Thessaloniki professor criticises twice the fanatical tendencies present among the Orthodox: "fanaticism is a cancer that stifles truth, because fanatics do not serve the truth; instead, they use truth to serve their own purpose" (p. 45).

Furthermore, he has the courage to say: “nowadays, some Greek theologians demonstrate either preference or passion for speaking against the West, against Western theology, thereby implying the superiority of East. They do not envision bridges; rather, they destroy them” (p. 46).

The first part ends with John Fotopoulos’ contribution, *Traveling with Paul the Apostle*. Fotopoulos is a specialist in New Testament and Early Church Literature in the context of Graeco-Roman society and culture. His paper offers a detailed picture of travel in the ancient world with many references to St Paul’s travels.

The second part of the volume opens with Helmut Koester’s study on *The Charismata of the Spirit in the Service of the Church* (p. 75). Koester shows that Paul’s perspective on the gifts of the Spirit presented in Romans 12 is different from that in 1 Corinthians: “the gifts of the Spirit seem to become identical with what we would call natural gifts... In a spectacular way, the gifts of the Spirit are brought down to earth so that they resemble the natural endowments of human beings as they are apportioned by God” (p. 85).

Closely linked to the theme of Koester’s study is the following paper by Karl P. Donfried, *The Life ‘in Christ’ in St. Paul: From Glory to Glory*. Donfried’s contribution reiterates the patristic principle according to which the participation in Christ cannot be achieved without suffering (p. 102).

The excellent study of the Jesuit Brian E. Daley opens up to the reader the world of patristic literature. Daley’s study looks at the question of how Paul’s theology as well as his figure as a model of preacher and servant of Christ are reflected in the writings of the Church Fathers. Drawing mainly on Augustin and John Chrysostom, Daley remarks their contrasting approaches to Paul, in spite of their similar education. The contrast can be explained by the different contexts in which the two Church Fathers wrote (p. 125).

From the patristic period, Jack Khalil brings us to the realm of present Church life, discussing the bishop’s duties as illustrated in the pastoral letters. Khalil remarks that Paul’s words “are above all addressed to you” (p. 146), meaning the assembly of hierarchs present at the symposium.

The following study *Paul and the World*, written by Petros Vassiliadis, begins the third and last part of the volume. Vassiliadis approaches the difficult topic of freedom in Paul’s letters. This contribution deserves a more detailed discussion than we are able to give here. We must mention the receptivity of this Orthodox author towards contemporary Jewish Biblical scholarship such as that of Daniel Boyarin. It is also interesting to point out Vassiliadis’ observations on how the reconsideration of Rom. 9-

11 has led to a change in perspective in the West: “today a refreshed reading of Rom 9-11 has helped scholars to underline that Paul's hope was not for a Christianity that was free from the Mosaic Law and distinct from Israel, but for an Israel defined by grace and call of God within which Gentiles had an internal place” (p. 155).

Also based on the understanding of contemporary Judaism, Turid K. Seim's paper *Race and Gender in St Paul* approaches another delicate topic of current interest, namely that of woman's place in Pauline theology.

Christos Oikonomou's contribution *St. Paul: From Jewish Introversion to Ecumenical Mission* discusses the relevance of Paul's Jewish descent for his ecumenical missionary activity.

The volume ends with the concluding remarks of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and the three appendices. We note the significance of the second appendix which provides information on the academic interests of the speakers. We also find the information related to the “World Association of Orthodox Theological Schools” and “The Society for Ecumenical Studies and Inter-Orthodox Relations” extremely valuable.

The publication of this volume in English, as well as the context in which the symposium took place, can certainly be seen as a bridge uniting the Orthodox from around the world and opening, at the same time, a valuable channel of communication between biblical scholars from the East and the West.