

CRAIG S. KEENER, *Galatians: A Commentary*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019). Pp. xlviii + 848. Hardcover. US\$59.99.

Galatians: A Commentary is an expanded version of Keener's previously published Cambridge commentary. This more extensive offering (848 pages compared to 294 pages) includes much of the previous text with modification.

Stylistically, the commentary is well laid out. After an extensive list of abbreviations, Keener includes his own translation of the whole letter (xxxvii–xlvi)—which is “a more colloquial, dynamic-equivalent rendering except where it would impair the connection between the translation in the notes” (xii)—and an outline of letter (xlvii–xlviii). His introduction discusses matters including: Luther's influence on the interpretation of Galatians; Galatians and Pauline theology; whether Galatians is an apocalyptic letter, which Keener argues must be viewed in relationship with Jewish Salvation-History rather than as a separate concept; key themes; the standard author, provenance, and dating of the letter (Keener opts for an early date of around 50–52 CE); the letter's audience; the North or South Galatia debate (Keener opts for the latter); an extensive discussion on Paul's opponents; the structure of the letter; rhetoric and Galatians; ancient letters and epistolary interpretation; and, finally, whether Paul's letter was effective or not.

The commentary itself is formatted in such a way that makes it highly readable. Across the commentary, the text is placed in shaded text boxes that not only distinguish the text from the commentary but also help break up the discussion. There is an extensive bibliography near the end of the commentary (589–712), followed by a brief index of subjects, an index of authors and selected names and an extensive index of Scripture and other ancient sources. The latter index covers 101 pages (747–848) and is presented in four columns, highlighting an extensive and impressive engagement with primary biblical and extra biblical material prior to and contemporary with Paul. Where Keener discusses specific Greek words and phrases, he provides both

Greek and English transliteration. Extensive footnotes direct the reader to primary and secondary sources, and inter-textual cross-references to other OT and NT references.

Overall, the general commentary section is fairly standard. Keener explores textual and contextual issues, including OT, extra biblical and socio-contextual issues relevant to each passage. Scattered throughout the commentary are a number of excurses that discuss ideas such as: cultural, historical, and religious ideas and practices that help situate Galatians in its broader socio-cultural context, and historical and geographical information that help locate Galatians and assist in understanding Paul's argument. The excurses include: social and cultural aspects, including, among other things, ancient images of freedom and slavery, whether Jews ate with Gentiles, ancient wills, and pedagogues; important theological aspects of the letter itself, such as, justification, "Christ-faith," righteous Abraham and Jewish tradition, Paul and the Law, law-works, pathos, the Law of Christ, rebirth, conversion, inheritance, circumcision and crucifixion. Each excursus presents a broad overview of the concept and extensive footnotes citing primary and secondary material that support the discussion. Finally, regular "Bridging Horizons" sections discuss possible ways to contextualise the letter for today. The following is a brief discussion on some specific interpretive details in the commentary.

On whether δι' ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is interpreted as a revelation "from" Jesus or a revelation "about" him, Keener adopts the latter. "God is the direct source of the revelation (1:15) and Jesus is the content (1:16)" (73). On justification in 2:16, Keener adopts the term "righted" which, he argues, is forensic (174–75). However, given that Paul considers that the Galatian believers also now share a new relationship with God in Christ by the Spirit, righteousness is also implicit in the phrase (176). Keener interprets πίστις Χριστοῦ as an objective genitive ("faith in Christ"); he accepts that a subjective genitive ("faith/faithfulness of Christ") is plausible, "if we think in terms of trusting Christ's reliability. That is, on either reading, the honour belongs to Christ alone" (183). Keener argues similarly

with ἔργων μόνου, which he terms “law-works”; most likely meaning “works done to observe the law” (184).

A strength throughout Keener’s commentary is the importance he places on the Spirit to Paul’s discussion. Although the Spirit is not mentioned until 3:2, Keener argues that the Spirit is present in a lot of concepts previous to this; and continues to be important to the rest of Paul’s argument. Although not explicitly stated in his comment on 3:14, Keener adopts an exegetical interpretation of τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πνεύματος (the promised Spirit/the promise that is the spirit) (257–59). While he situates 5:1 with 4:21–31, Keener also acknowledges that 5:1 is a transitional verse that summarises what has been previously discussed as well as pointing to what follows (439), and which bridges the indicative and imperative in Paul’s argument.

On 5:13–6:10, in contrast to recent apocalyptic readings of Galatians that view σὰρξ (flesh) in terms of a cosmic power, Keener adopts a more anthropological reading where σὰρξ represents bodily desires that reflect the evil impulses within the individual, indicative of some Jewish thought (496). Keener views 6:11–18 as a postscript to the letter but acknowledges that it represents the closing part of Paul’s body argument. As such, 6:11–18 summarises many of the themes from earlier in the letter, including circumcision, the cross, persecution and Paul’s relationship with the Galatians (559). On 6:15 (573–75), circumcision and uncircumcision represent physical identity markers; the former signifying a high status for Paul’s opponents, the latter a far better status from a Gentile point of view. According to Keener, for Paul none of these matter in light of new creation. The new creation motif found only here in 6:15, along with the presence of Spirit language throughout the letter following 3:2, both provide recurring focal points for his discussion on the situation the Galatians are confronting with Paul’s opponents regarding Christ crucified, law, circumcision and covenant belonging.

Overall, the commentary is well-written and accessible for non-academic and academic alike. Whatever the reasons for

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studying Galatians, this commentary is an important resource and worth having on the bookshelf.

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