**James D.G.Dunn, The Theology of Paul the Apostles Michigan/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1998; pp. xxxvi+808, Hardcover, $ 45.00.**

James D,G. Dunn, Lightfoot Professor of Divinity at the University of Durham, through this major work has brought together for contemporary scholars and students of Pauline Theology the results of more than two decades of creative work in interpreting the letters of Paul and his theology. Here we have an integrated and elaborate study of Paul, the first and greatest Christian theologian of the early Church from a new perspective. The influence of Pauline theology in the history of the Church is unique. During the patristic period Paul exerted great influence on Clement, Ignatius and Irenaeus, and Augustine restated Christian theology as a form of Pauline theology, which came to dominate most of the Middle Ages. It was preeminently the influence of Paul's theology which shaped the Reformation. Paul's profound theological reflection and pastoral insight had been the focus of serious scholarly study in recent years. In fact, it is important for each generation of Christian theology to reflect afresh on Paul's theology, and here we have the result of a fresh attempt by James D.G. Dunn. After having published several commentaries on the various letters of Paul, Dunn has crowned his Pauline research with this opus magnum. Dunn is of the view that a worthwhile theology of Paul is to be characterized by a spirit Of dialogue, a dialogue of listening and also a participation in the dialogue itself.

Having been written over a long period Of eight of more years, and being addressed to a variety of communities during the first century, in a certain sense a theology of Paul cannot be more than the sum of the theology of each of the individual letters. But, according to Dunn, such a static understanding of Paul's theology is not correct. There must be, according to him, an organizing centre of Paul's theology. Opinions in the past about such a centre varied from scholar to scholar, such as, a tension between Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity (Baur), justification by faith (Bultmann), participation in Christ or Christ Mysticism (Schweitzer), theology of the cross (Wilkens), Paul's anthropology (Braun) and salvation history (Cullmann). Approaching Paul's theology as embracing at the same time both Christian thinking and Christian living, Dunn maintains that the substructure of Paul's theology is the story of God and creation, with the story of Israel superimposed on it. On top of that we have the story of Jesus, and then Paul's own story, with the material intertwining these last two stories as the decisive turning point in Paul's life and theology. Finally, there are the complex interactions of Paul's own story with the stories of those who had believed before him and of those who came to form the churches founded by them (p. 18). Dunn also holds the view that Paul's letter to the Romans is a kind of foundation for constructing such a comprehensive theology of Paul, a letter written by him under the most congenial circumstances Of his mission, with time for careful reflection and composition. This letter was intended to set out and defend his mature understanding of the gospel. Hence it is the most sustained and reflective statement of Paul's own theology by Paul himself. In other words, Romans provides us with an example of the way Paul himself chose to order the sequence of themes in his theological reflection.

Dunn develops the theology of Paul, first of all, from God as the axiom of his theology. God is the foundational presupposition of Paul's theological thinking, the starting point of his theologizing, the pnmary subtext of all his writing (p.28). The word "God" occurs 548 times in the Pauline corpus, 153 times in Romans alone. Paul's theology of God was no abstract speculation, but sustained and informed by his own experience in his conversion and mission and prayer. The second major axiom for Paul is his anthropology in so far as humankind is the recipient of God's revelation and grace. What is characteristic of this humankind are its embodiment and its freshness and its consequent frailty and vulnerability, on the one hand, and its rationality and reflective thought, on the other hand. The polarization and convergence of these aspects are visible in its ability to experience the deepest emotions and the most sustained motivations. It is this mystery of human life which Paul analyses under the aspect of its universal indictment (Rom  which is seen as a falling short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23), and is thereby given in to sin and to the slavery of the law and to the tragedy of death. 

It is to this humankind that the gospel of God as the power of God for salvation is given in and through Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, as a divine response to the human indictment. Paul takes particular care to see the person and work of Christ in their comprehensive dimensions in so far as he is the pre-existent one as well as the one who is the goal of the historical process. It all means that through Christ there has been a

decisive shift in the possibilities confronting humankind. As a result an era of grace has been inaugurated and a new beginning has been constituted. Using several metaphors of salvation, Paul explains the new era that has been inaugurated through Christ, which is to be appropriated thröugh faith and baptism. Through these saving acts the believers participate in the mystery of Christ and are entitled to the gift of the Spirit. What is characteristic of Paul's treatment of this salvific act of Christ is that the believers are placed in an "eschatological tension" (p.461) between the already and the not yet, and to that extent the polarization between the flesh and the spirit is an ongoing process. What is expected of the believers is that they should stand firm, share Christ's sufferings and move forward to the eschatological goal of salvation.

Since the letter to the Romans is taken by Dunn as the axiomatic writing of Paul to outline his theology, it is also necessary to analyze the problem of Israel (Romans 9-1 1) which is a very crucial and persona] one for Paul and his theology. Paul's optimism about Israel is such that he concluded to the possibility of Israel receiving the eschatological blessings together with the Gentiles. Here we see that Paul wanted to build bridges between issues rather than to sever them (p.532). The discussion on the destiny of Israel as the people of God in God's plan of salvation invites the author to a discussion on the Church as the corporate identity with its specific characteristics and ministries as well as its unique and climactic celebration of the Lord's Supper, which proclaims the whole gospel and provides instruction as well as sustenance during the long slog from the already to the not yet (p. 632).

A major feature of Paul's theology is his vigorous ethical concern. This concern is spread throughout his writings as an 'imperative' following God's 'indicative', namely, theological proclamation leading to ethical exhortation. What God has done in and through Christ is the basis of what the believers must do (p.630). Without the imperative the Christian ceases to be a responsible person within the Church and world. It is all a question of "becoming what you are" (Pindar). The controlling powers of such a committed life Paul metaphorically calls the "law of faith" (Rom 3:27), the "law of the Spirit" (Rom 8:2), and the "law of Christ" (Gal 6:2), where the 'law' means principle or norm. It is also important to remember that Paul is not one who is promoting only personal ethics. His concern at every turn was with social interaction. The individual as individual could hardly hope to live out Paul's ethical principles solely on his or her on. Concem for others is an underlying principle of social ethics and Paul always emphasized this aspect of Christian life.

Dunn concludes his work with an epilogue recalling Paul's theology as dialogue and the stable foundation of Paul's theology, namely, Christ as the focal and pivotal point. Together with it, Dunn emphasizes the enduring value of Paul's own example, not just as Christian and theologian, but also as teacher and pastor and apostle. Considering the amount of theological insight and original thinking Dunn has provided in this work, it can be safely recommended as a very useful and rewarding reference book for scholars and students of Pauline theology. Occasional repetitive tones and argumentative style could have been to some extent avoided to make the work easier to read and analyses.

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