

But when Abraham finds the requirement of circumcision in small print, Abraham says "I'd like to check/Some of this out with my wife," and God responds: "NO WAY. THIS IS JUST BETWEEN US MEN."

There is so much in this book for prayer, for reflection, and for preaching that it is difficult to decide what to quote. But I will end with some lines from Ernesto Cardenal's gloss on psalm 150 which demonstrates a poet expanding our language of praise in light of the technological world that Susan White has examined in her book:

Praise the Lord in the cosmos  
His sanctuary  
with a radius of a hundred thousand million light years

Praise Him through the stars  
and the interstellar spaces . . .

Praise Him through the atoms  
and the interatomic voids . . .

Praise Him with violas and cellos  
with pianos and pianolas

Praise Him with blues and jazz  
and with symphonic orchestras

with Negro spirituals  
and with Beethoven's Fifth  
with guitars and marimbas

Praise Him with record players  
and with magnet tapes

Let everything that breathes praise the Lord  
every living cell  
Hallelujah

□ Thomas H. Troeger

## HUMAN SCIENCES & CULTURE

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20 Robert Jewett, *Paul the Apostle to America: Cultural Trends and Pauline Scholarship*. Westminster/John Knox, 1994. \$16.99.

Can a preacher overcome the problem of Eurocentrism in Pauline scholarship and faithfully interpret the Apostle Paul in the North American context? Do the manifest problems and latent possibilities within American culture open up new trajectories of meaning within the Pauline epistles? Is there anything new that can be said about Paul? After reading Robert Jewett's engaging and provocative book, *Paul the Apostle to America: Cultural Trends and Pauline Scholarship*, the reader will answer all of these questions with a resounding "yes!"

According to Jewett, Eurocentric interpretations of Paul accentuate the characteristics, interests, and worldview of European society, especially hierarchical pecking orders, aristocratic emulation of “great men,” and social pessimism. Reading Paul in the North American context, on the other hand, the interpreter notices in Paul’s writing an incipient form of egalitarianism, encouragement for a collegial style of ministry, and the grounds for social optimism.

Within this new framework, Jewett sets out, in the first half of the book, to see what Paul has to say to three cultural trends in the American context: anti-semitism, sexual liberation, and racism. Summarizing the literature to date on the Jew-Gentile issue, Jewett concludes that “to expect the fulfillment of Paul’s hope that ‘all Israel will be saved’ in the sense of accepting Gentile doctrine and self-identity is a misunderstanding of Paul’s original vision of a pluralistic world community.” (p. 44) On sexual liberation, Jewett notes a shift from “equality in principle” to “consistent equality” in Paul’s writings, and finally a regressive rejection of equality in the later Pauline tradition. He invites the preacher to “recover this theological legacy” and to preach and teach “an egalitarian ethic” similar to the one “toward which Paul was moving in the last decade of his life.” (p. 58) On racism, Jewett focuses on the transformational rhetoric of Philemon in which Paul “insists that he wants ‘nothing by compulsion’ from Philemon” . . . but “seeks to persuade an equal brother in Christ to act in a way consistent with the transforming event of Christ.” (p. 68) This we may take as our own strategy as we preach and teach about racism.

In the second half of the book, Jewett highlights several new Pauline resources for the American future. First, he observes in the early tene-ment churches and in the Pauline love feasts a mutuality and egalitarian form of church leadership that counteracts the usual view of the early church as defined by hierarchically organized house churches. In the next chapter, “Discharged from the Law of Consumerism,” Jewett interprets Paul’s conversion “not as the relief of a guilty and introspective conscience” but as a revelation of a new status before God that discharges us from the law of conformity and coveteousness—an important message for our consumer society. From there, Jewett moves on to the issue of education and knowledge in the American context. He identifies in Paul’s writing a commitment to a communal, pluralistic, and countercultural epistemology that provides an important critique of both essentialist and progressivist educational models. Jewett concludes his book with a chapter on “Paul and the Democratic Prospect.” In the wake of the Oklahoma bombing, this chapter is a very valuable contribution. According to Jewett, Paul critiques political zealotism as an uncritical form of cultural conformity. Jewett goes on to celebrate the radical democratization of the Pauline churches as a model for the democratic process.

This book is nicely written and well organized. I used it in a course on “Preaching the New Testament” and it was an odds-on favorite with students. Each chapter presents a useful summary of Pauline scholarship relevant to the various topics discussed. Chapters end with applications to the American cultural scene. Take the time to read this book. You will be richly rewarded.

□ John S. McClure