

The Spirit and the Congregation: Studies in 1 Corinthians 12—15. By Ralph P. Martin. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984, 168 pp., \$10.95.

I read this book after I had virtually finished my preparation for a series of lectures on 1 Corinthians 12—14 and had therefore canvassed hundreds of articles and scores of books on these difficult and disputed chapters. As far as book-length studies go, only a handful of works stand out as treatments that merit serious study. Martin's is among them.

The book is by and large understandable without any knowledge of the original language. The notes are reasonably full and offer some insight into the secondary literature, and the "Points to Ponder" at the end of each section of Martin's translation of the text raise questions for the Greek student. I mean that quite literally: These "Points" ask questions of the Greek student, which are for the most part answered only in the exposition itself.

Martin argues that there is an underlying theological error behind these chapters. Some substantial part of this Hellenistic church came to hold the view that baptism constituted their resurrection to new life. This experience gave them an entrance to an exalted life in the here and now, an exalted life whose genius was a sensible experience of "spirit" of which "speaking in tongues" was the sign and proof. Their eschatology was over-realized, and their future hope of a new bodily existence of the resurrection was collapsed into a kind of spiritual ecstasy of the present. That is one of the reasons why Martin links chap. 15 to chaps. 12—14; the question of the resurrection is utterly bound up with the eschatological error that underlies the problem of ecstatic utterance. In that sense, of course, one could argue that what is really required is an exposition of the entire epistle—but I suppose one has to stop somewhere.

This is not the place to raise detailed objections to exegetical points, but perhaps I may indicate my hesitations on at least two points. First, Martin detects several "quotations" from the Corinthian church in the material that Paul writes, but I remain unpersuaded that he provides controls adequate for the justification of this position. They are quite unlike the undisputed instances (e.g. 6:12, etc.). Second, Martin offers his own modification of the now common view that in 1 Cor 14:34—36 Paul is dealing with charismatic women who so wish to usurp authority that they have tumbled into doctrinal error. The silence he enjoins is therefore limited by this theological deviation. I confess I have never been able to understand an exegesis of this passage that makes Paul so chauvinistic that the only heretics he is prepared to silence are the female ones. Or does Martin seriously think that the only Corinthians who espoused these deviant theories in Corinth were women?

Martin interacts with the most important works of scholarship, but he purposely does not deal with popular books. In writing an exposition at a semi-popular level, however, that can prove a serious oversight. There may not be many international-class scholars who hold that the tongues in 1 Corinthians 12—14 were real languages and the gift of interpretation merely the ability to translate them into the Greek of Corinth, or that the middle voice of 13:8 means that tongues will cease of themselves; but there are many

people around who believe precisely those points and who justify their interpretation on the basis of popular or semi-popular expositions. It is to be regretted that Martin does not respond, in his own semi-popular work, to such concerns.

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