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**Penna, Romano.**  
***Paul the Apostle: A Theological and Exegetical Study.***  
***Vol. 1: Jew and Greek Alike.***  
***Vol. 2: Wisdom and Folly of the Cross***

Translated by Thomas P. Wahl

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In these two impressive volumes, Romano Penna, one of Italy's finest Pauline scholars, collects some of his previously published Pauline articles and a few conference papers that "betray their original oral character" (p. ix). Many have been revised to bring them up to date.

After an "Introduction to Paulinism" (pp. 1-18), the chapters of volume one are: "The Jews in Rome at the Time of the Apostle Paul" (pp. 19-47); "Jewish-Christian Structures of the Roman Church in the First Century" (pp. 48-59); "The Structural Function of 3:1-8 in the Letter to the Romans" (pp. 60-89); "Narrative Aspects of the Letter to the Romans" (pp. 90-102); "Romans 1:18-2:29: Between Missionary Preaching and Borrowing from the Environment" (pp. 103-110); "Paul's Detractors in Romans 3:8" (pp. 111- 23); "Baptism and Participation in the Death of Christ in Romans 6:1-11" (pp. 124-41); "The Motif of the *'Aqedah* Against the Background of Romans 8:32" (pp. 142-68); "The Gospel as 'Power of God' According to 1 Corinthians 1:18-25" (pp. 169-80); "Saint Paul and Diogenes the Cynic: 1 Corinthians 7:29b-31a" (pp. 181-90); "Only Love Will Have No End. A Reading of 1 Corinthians 13 in Its Various Senses" (pp. 191-205); "Adamic Christology and Anthropological Optimism in 1 Corinthians 15:45-49" (pp. 206-31); "The Apostle's Suffering: Anthropology and Eschatology in 2 Corinthians 4:7-5:10" (pp. 232- 58); "The Presence of Paul's Opponents in 2 Corinthians 10-13: Literary Examination" (pp. 259-89); "The Evolution of Paul's Attitude Toward the Jews" (pp. 290-322).

The chapters of volume two are: "Preaching as Sacrament of Salvation in Paul and the New Testament" (pp. 1-9); "Sin and Redemption: A Synthesis" (pp. 10-23); "The Blood of Christ in the Pauline Letters" (pp. 24-44); "The Wisdom of the Cross and Its

Foolishness as Foundation of the Church" (pp. 45-60); "Paul's Attitude Toward the Old Testament" (pp. 61-91); "Justification by Faith in Paul and James" (pp. 92-114); "The Problem of the Law in Paul's Letters" (pp. 115-34); "Dissolution and Restoration of the Relationship of Law and Wisdom in Paul" (pp. 135-62); "Problems of Pauline Morality: The Present State of the Question" (pp. 163-73); "Christianity and Secularity/Laicity in Saint Paul: Remarks" (pp. 174-84); "'Love Builds Up': Ecclesiological Aspects of *Agape* in Saint Paul" (pp. 185-200); "The Dialectic Between Seeking and Discovering God in the Pauline Epistles" (pp. 201-34); "Problems and Nature of Pauline Mysticism" (pp. 235-73), and, as an appendix, "The 'Viso Pauli' and the Apocalyptic Ascents of the *Divine Comedy*" (pp. 274-82).

As the author observes, in presenting Paul's theology, one can choose either a systematic/synthetic approach that risks being excessively abstract, or a more topical analytic approach that risks never achieving an overview. Since Penna's purpose is to collect his best publications on Paul, he chooses the latter approach--making a virtue of necessity--while claiming some theoretical justification for this procedure since Paul's thought "is scarcely amenable to an iron clad Aristotelian logic" (p. ix). Nevertheless, volume one, which is also designated in the table of contents as "History and Exegesis," clearly has an organizing structure--the one provided by the canon. This cannot fail to suggest that to understand Paul one should begin with Romans, and indeed, Penna's essays often support the hypothesis that Pauline thought on several subjects develops throughout his epistles, culminating in Romans. In fact, the scripture indexes of *both* volumes, woefully inadequate as they are, confirm by the sheer number of references that Romans and Corinthians are the keys to Paul for Penna. On the other hand, volume two, which is also designated in the table of contents as "Theology and Spirituality," appears to have no discernible structure at all.

Development in Paul's thought is a fairly recurrent theme in these volumes. Penna discerns development on such subjects as the Jews, the Law, Scripture, justification by faith, anthropology, and eschatology, and his particular developmental perspectives occasionally lead to fresh insights. For example, on the first subject, Penna concentrates not on the evolution of Paul's "ideas," but on his "attitudes" toward the Jews. The effect of this shift is most intriguing with regard to 1 Thess 2:14-16. Penna argues that Paul's point of view here is not that of salvation history, but of mission: "We are, then, confronting not a global and theoretical judgment of the Jews but a position taken on the basis of historical circumstances. . . . The Jews in 1 Thess 2:14-16 do not yet present a problem by the mystery of their unbelief, but rather by their active opposition to the Christian preaching. It is only this that explains the severity of Paul's stance" (1.296- 97).

Nevertheless, one subject in Paul that Penna finds remarkably free of development is love. Paul's gospel is a love story in every respect. As Penna puts it in a remarkable passage, "I firmly believe that the theological value of 1 Cor 13 remains intact and absolute, independently of the biographical and conceptual evolution of its author, unlike

that of other elements of Paul's theology (as is probably the case with the concept of the Law, and especially of the delay of the parousia)" (1.192). Problematic as this statement is with its uncharacteristic abandonment of a historical-critical respect for the *Sitz-im-Leben* of 1 Corinthians 13, it is attractive nevertheless, and helps account for the frequent appearance of the theme of love throughout many of Penna's essays. It reminds us that Penna is a Roman Catholic, respectful of Protestantism's historic emphasis on justification by faith, but rightly critical when it has occasionally eclipsed an emphasis on love. He even goes so far as to say that "from a certain point of view, it would not be inappropriate to seek to replace the Lutheran *sola fide*, 'by faith alone,' with a more impartial . . . *sola caritate*, 'by love alone,' provided that this formula were exempt from any spiteful form of polemic or any extremism, which would be incompatible with love (cf. 1 Cor 13:4)" (1.205).

Penna is ever the meticulous historian. The essay called "The Jews in Rome at the Time of the Apostle Paul" (1:19-47) identifies and classifies all the sources available for an investigation and then offers "a documented treatment of the subject," attempting to answer such questions as "(1) How many Jews were there? And how many Jewish communities? (2) How were they organized? (3) Where did they originally come from? (4) Where were they distributed in the City? (5) What was their social level? (6) What can we reconstruct of their beliefs?" (1.21). Penna, unlike some, is always aware of what the evidence can and cannot tell us about these questions, and such careful discernment leads him in the following essay, "Jewish-Christian Structures of the Roman Church in the First Century," rightly to observe that the historical reconstruction of a Roman Church conflict in the 50s caused by the return of Jews to Rome proposed in Wiefel's frequently cited study "is in fact totally hypothetical" (1.51).

Finally, let me emphasize that Penna is nearly always well informed, balanced, and judicious. Especially exemplary is his chapter on "Paul's Attitude Toward the Old Testament" (2.61-91), which does justice to the bewildering variety of negative and positive remarks Paul makes on the subject of Scripture, resisting the temptation of making him either a forerunner of Marcion or a scribe for the Kingdom of God.

These volumes will make excellent resources for seminary courses in Pauline theology. They are a pleasure to read and the translator is to be commended. As the tables of contents reproduced above confirm, the essays address most of the major theological issues in the study of Paul, and usually with copious footnotes useful for further research. Sadly, neither volume includes an index of authors, and the subject indexes are very inadequate.