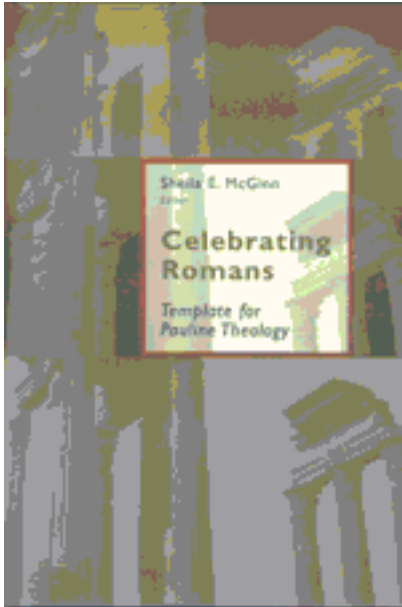


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McGinn, Sheila E., ed.

***Celebrating Romans: Template for Pauline Theology:
Essays in Honor of Robert Jewett***

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Celebrating Romans: Template for Pauline Theology, edited by Sheila E. McGinn, is a well-written Festschrift that honors Robert Jewett's contribution to biblical studies and his forthcoming commentary on Romans. McGinn organizes the essays according to five methodological approaches with the premise that "analytical methods are not mere 'window dressing' but actually construct knowledge" (xv). The approaches are theological, rhetorical, sociohistorical, feminist, and what is titled "a dialogue with contemporary life." Using these approaches singly and in combination, some essays do construct new knowledge (e.g., those by Lampe, Dunn, Gibson, Osiek, Thimmes), others review and revise prior positions (e.g., Campbell, Dunn, Hester), and still others can be assets in the classroom (e.g., McGinn, Snyder, Finger, Burton, Hurst, Wuellner). The result is a collection that engages scholars, teachers, and upper-level students on a variety of levels—a fitting tribute to Jewett's own scholarship.

Teachers will find the sociohistorical, feminist, and contemporary cultural approaches, as well as Snyder's history of interpretation, to be most useful. For example, Snyder reviews the ways new methods have constructed new knowledge about Romans over the centuries. Lampe traces the "Paths of Early Christian Mission into Rome" by examining epigraphical evidence and reconstructing social worlds. Osiek uses second-century

documents to compare the social dynamics of the later Roman church to the church in Paul's time. Using these different approaches, Osiek and Lampe both paint a picture of loose organization and broad socioeconomic and religious diversity in the first-century Roman church. Campbell's more difficult essay adds to this picture using a rhetorical approach and focusing on "Jewish Roots and Christian Identity." These essays confirm McGinn's premise and help students imagine the world of a first-century Roman Christian.

The feminist approaches combine a few methods, drawing on the reader's experience, theology, social backgrounds, and rhetorical methods. McGinn's essay gives an overview of feminist scholarship on Paul, observing that few apply this approach to Romans. Tamez is an exception. In her essay "Justification as Good News for Women," Tamez begins with women's social experience and then moves to justification and grace. If "sin" is acquiescing to predetermined social roles, God's justice requires taking the initiative to resist and change fixed social roles. Tamez's move constructs Paul's categories of "justification" and "grace" in new ways. Taking a different tack, Thimmes begins with Paul's difficult analogy in Rom 7:1-4. Rather than resolve the difficulty, she asks how Paul's language in the analogy shapes social roles. Both authors demonstrate McGinn's point that shifting one's approach opens up new meaning.

The section entitled "Romans in Dialogue with Contemporary Life" is the most creative and follows Jewett's work of setting Romans in conversation with "American cultural trends" (240). Burton and Stevens use film as a heuristic device for reading Romans, offering an excellent way to engage students in the classroom. Halteman Finger's essay provides teaching "aids" for "Using Simulation and Controversy to Help Students and Lay Persons Interpret Romans."

Finally, many of the essays offer scholars a new perspective on material, literary, and rhetorical evidence with respect to Romans. For example, Dunn challenges scholarly views on Paul's language of covenant, arguing that "Promise Theology" better describes Paul's reasoning. Gibson examines the social use and function of Paul's "dying formula" to argue that Paul applies the phrase "X died for Y" to Christ in order to challenge the assumptions about what constitutes public and private salvation.

Jewett's commitment to constructing new knowledge through applying new methods, to the point of creatively engaging contemporary culture in the interpretive process, is reflected in this Festschrift. Scholars, teachers, and students alike will benefit.

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Vita Robert Jewett

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