Stanley E. Porter – Christopher D. Land, *Paul and His Social Relations* (Pauline Studies 7; Leiden – Boston: Brill 2013) Pp. 388 + XII. € 148. Hardcover. ISBN 978-90-04-24422-1

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Paul and His Social Relations by Stanley E. Porter and Christopher D. Land is the seventh volume of the "Pauline Studies" series which includes publications that discussed the Pauline canon, the opponents of the apostle, his Greco-Roman and Jewish background, and the epistolary forms which he used. The reviewed publication offers a multifaceted look at the network of Paul's social relations. All volumes in the series have in common the fact that their editor is Stanley E. Porter, a prolific author and specialist in Pauline literature, president, dean and professor of New Testament at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. The co-editor of *Paul and His Social Relations*, Christopher D. Land, also teaches at McMaster Divinty College. In the presented book, readers will find a collection of essays on various aspects of Paul's social relationships read with the use of the historical-critical method, cultural anthropology, semiotics and discourse analysis. The publication consists of Preface, list of Abbreviations, Introduction, eleven essays, Index of Modern Authors and Editors and Index of Ancient Sources.

In Introduction (pp. 1-6), Stanley E. Porter and Christopher D. Land make a brief presentation of all essays, placing them in the broader perspective of the discussion on Paul's relationships with individuals and entire communities. These issues have been seriously raised since the days of F.C. Baur (the school in Tübingen) and Adolf Deissmann. They still remain the object of interest for many scholars, who discuss the social network of the apostle in the key of hermeneutic of suspicion, politics of power and socio-economic processes which govern community life.

In the first essay, "How Do We Define Pauline Social Relations?" (pp. 7-33), Stanley E. Porter undertakes not an easy task to describe the various methodological approaches used in studying Paul's social relations. He divides them generally into four groups: socio-historical, historical-textual, ecclesial and

DOI: https://doi.org/10.31743/ba.2018.8.4.09
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ISSN 2083–2222
e-ISSN 2451-2168

linguistic. In the group of authors, who use the socio-historical approach, Porter puts Gerd Theissen, John Gager, Howard Clark Kee, Bruce Malin and, of course, Wayne Meeks. Porter devotes most of his attention to the last author and his book *The First Urban Christians* (1983), describing its methodology and sources. Meeks argued that in early Church both the richest and the poorest members were lacking, while Christian communities consisted predominantly of the intermediate levels of society. Meeks embodies the so-called new consensus which questions previous research represented by Deissmann and Gager, who argued for the poor people constituting the core of Christian communities. The latter view has recently reemerged in the publications by Justin Meggit and Stephen Friesen. In the last paragraphs sketching the socio-historical approach, Porter draws attention to its characteristics and weaknesses, which are: external approach to data, loose relation to texts, major variable, which is the interpretative framework of authors, and pertinence of the employed models.

Among the researchers representing the historical-textual approach, Porter mentions F.F. Bruce (*The Pauline Circle*). His method is characterized by greater attention devoted to the text itself, in which the author tries to describe the social, cultural and economic dynamics accompanying Paul's relationships with individuals. Bruce also has his weaknesses, which include the accumulation of data and treating them in the same way, without distinguishing the weight and value of individual Pauline relations. In the next group, which employs the so-called "ecclesial approach", Porter includes Robert Banks (*Paul's Idea of Community*). Examining the churches of Paul against the background of other voluntary associations, Banks points to their characteristic feature, which is freedom in Christ and greater than elsewhere cross-sectional representation (Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, men and women). The weakness of Banks' approach is the extremely extensive and diversified category of "voluntary associations", which he chooses as a reference point for the Pauline communities. Porter also criticizes him for creating a picture that is too general, in which the specificity and particularity of communities and individual relations is missing, and the reader is left with an abstract and idealized idea of the Church. Here also Porter refers to the Horsley's model of Christianity as an "alternative society", arguing, however, that its goal did not overlap with questioning the political order of the Roman Empire. Finally, the last, linguistic approach consists of scholars who study specific expressions, syntax, salutations and endings of Paul's letters, thus discovering the strategies by which the apostle promotes or demotes his coworkers.

Another essay, "Paul, Timothy, and Pauline Individualism: A Response to Bruce Malina" by Mark Batluck (pp. 35-56) comprises a discussion with Bruce Malina and his book *Timothy: Paul's Closest Associate* (2008). In the mentioned publication, Malina promotes his well-known theses on the collectivistic and

"anti-introspective" character of ancient personalities. Batluck begins by placing Malina in a spectrum of researchers representing the world of social-cultural criticism (he belongs to the scholars, who draw on social and cultural rules constraining the interaction of ancient persons and communities, using profusely cultural anthropology). In the discussed book, Malina employs a "social-psychological" approach, which Batluck rightly criticizes as based on the contemporary American model and driven by excessive polarization between the collective and individual. The model is anachronistic and it finds no support in Pauline texts, where personalities with both individualistic and self-reflective characteristics are portrayed (1 Corinthians 15:10, Ga 1:10; 2 Cor 11:1; Romans 7; Phil 2:1-4, 20-21). The alternative, according to the author, is a "modified collectivism", which recognizes the individual characteristics of Paul and his coworkers, interpreting them against the background of collectivistic ancient culture.

The third essay, "Paul, Patronage and Benefaction: A 'Semiotic' Reconsideration" by Bruce A. Lowe (pp. 57-84), offers a semiotic assessment of the patron-client model, increasingly popular in the analysis of the New Testament texts. At the beginning, the author introduces the reader to the discussion on patronage and benefaction by referring to the magisterial work of Richard P. Saller (*Personal Patronage under the Early Empire*) and criticizing his reliance on the anthropological studies of Anton Blok. It led Saller to equating the concepts of patronage and benefaction, which Lowe proposes to distinguish, following other authors like Stephen Joubert and Jonathan Marshall. The relationships of patronage were characterized by subordination and mutual exchange of goods, which is not perceived in an altruistic model of benefaction. Recalling the methodology of Ferdinand de Saussure, Lowe draws attention to the fact that words (signifiers) and concepts (signified), in this case patronage, assume different meanings in different times and places. He postulates the careful use of sociology, the distinction between synchronic and diachronic investigation with the focus on the latter, which must, however, be carried on in a sufficiently broad cultural context. The author concludes with a short sample of such a reading from the Letter to the Romans.

The fourth essay, "Paul and the 'Social Relations' of Death at Rome (Romans 5:14, 17, 21)" by James R. Harrison (pp. 85-123), provides a look at the neglected in biblical studies reference to death in the Roman society at the time of Nero. The author describes a kind of "culture of death" during Nero's reign, which generally characterized the Julio-Claudian rulers. The state of "living death", the rule of death, humiliation and deprivation of honor, which were experienced at the time primarily by representatives of the aristocracy, according to the author can be echoed in the reign of sin and death, which Paul describes in Rom 5-6. Harrison is aware that in the witnesses quoted by him one predominantly hears

the voice of the minority, the elite, but, apart from the texts of philosophers and poets, he also studies the epitaphs of individuals coming from various echelons of society. They show a gloomy picture of death which ceases to be part of the *cursus honorum*. Remedy for the "living death" cannot be found in philosophy, or, as advised by Horace, in the goodness of Caesar, in living the moment, in poetry or Stoic virtues. The hopeless situation of a man without Christ, which Paul sketches in Rom 5:12-14, can be inspired by the images of death known to him from Roman culture. According to the apostle, however, death has lost its power over those who belong to Christ. It is part of the "old age" that has passed away. The crucified Christ, standing in opposition to the Roman culture of strength and violence, has ended the reign of death.

The fifth paper, "The Relationships of Paul and Luke: Luke, Paul's Letters, and 'We' Passages of Acts" by Sean A. Adams (pp. 125-142), investigates the relationship between Paul and Luke in Acts, in the passages where the plural "we" appears. The author makes a short note on the theory about Luke as Paul's amanuensis and moves to the historical figure of the evangelist and the authorship of the Acts of the Apostles. In discussing these matters, Adams refers to both external evidence (fathers of the Church) and internal, textual features, ultimately arguing that the historical Luke is the best candidate for the authorship of the Gospel and the Acts. By examining the places in the Acts where "we" occurs, the author concludes that it indicates the relationship between Luke and Paul. It is hard to qualify the mentioned fragments as a separate historical source, and the relationship between Luke and Paul envisaged there seems to go beyond the historical framework.

The sixth essay, "The Authorship of Hebrews: A Further Development in the Luke-Paul Relationship" by Andrew A. Pitts and Joshua F. Walker (pp. 143-184), calls into question the established consensus saying that Paul is not the author of the Letter to the Hebrews. Pitts and Walker claim that the letter was edited by Luke on the basis of an original Pauline speech delivered in one of the Diaspora synagogues. In support of their thesis, the authors adduce a number of interesting and convincing arguments. They start by presenting how speeches circulated in the ancient world and how they were written down by historians and stenographers. Orations could function independently, as standalone documents apart from collections, and their editors often changed style and phraseology, embellishing the originals and in the same time remaining faithful to their content. Similar processes can be seen in the transmission of Christian texts, as evidenced in the history of the Gospel of Marek, the Gospel of Thomas, or the so-called Q source. Luke, the only known editor of Pauline speeches, was well-suited to become the editor of the Letter to the Hebrews, which in turn is the only epistle that does not belong to any New Testament collection. According to Pitts and Walker, the

placing of the Hebrews after Pauline epistles in the oldest papyri and codices, the voices of historians and fathers of the Church, as well as internal testimonies (Christology, use of the Scriptures, theological concepts and vocabulary) speak for the Pauline authorship of the letter. At the same time, when examining the style of the epistle, the authors point to external (Clement of Alexandria, Origen) and internal (style, vocabulary) proofs bespeaking the connection between the letter and Luke's works. In the end, dismissing possible objections, Pitts and Walker endorse their thesis on the Letter to the Hebrews which originated as Paul's speech delivered in one of the Diaspora synagogues. It was put down by Luke, who carefully elaborated it using his own style, but keeping Paul's thought.

The next essays included in *Paul and His Social Relations* will be treated in a more succinct manner. Christoph Stenschke in "The Significance and Function of References to Christians in the Pauline Literature" (pp. 185-228), investigates references to churches, saints and brothers in the *Corpus Paulinum*, concluding that they point to translocal relationships in early Christianity, network of communication and mobility that existed among churches. Christopher D. Land, in "'We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited': Paul's Response to an Idol Food Inquiry in 1 Corinthians 8:1-13" (pp. 229-283), applies discourse analysis to 1 Cor 8:1-13. Land argues that the main theme of the passage is not Paul's concern for the weak, building the community, or "self-sacrifice through accommodation", but rather "removal of the behavior that might hinder public witness" (280-281). The concern for the effective proclamation of the Gospel in Corinth governs Paul's appeals to refrain from eating meat dedicated to idols. In the text "Paul, the Corinthians' Meal and the Social Context" (pp. 285-299), Panayotis Coutsoumpos discusses the church meal in Corinth, using the model of *eranos*, Greco-Roman dinner party. The social differences and inequalities inherent in *eranos* were transferred to the Church, being the cause of divisions and discontent of some members and provoking severe criticism of the Corinthians' behavior from the part of the apostle. In the penultimate article, "The Christ-Pattern for Social Relationships: Jesus as Exemplar in the Philippians and Other Pauline Epistles", Mark Keown (pp. 301-331) shows how the pattern revealed in Christ's sacrificial death (self-giving, humility, obedience, service) undergirds social relations in Paul, serving the Gospel of salvation with respect to the pagan world and in Church communities. Finally, H.H. Drake Williams III in "Honouring Epaphroditus: A Suffering and Faithful Servant Worthy of Admiration" (pp. 333-355) demonstrates how Paul honors and commends Epaphroditus by comparing his service to Christ's and to his own apostolic sufferings.

The collective work *Paul and His Social Relations* edited by Stanley E. Porter and Christopher D. Land is a book worth recommending. It is not a manual

explaining the socio-scientific approach to Pauline letters. Readers will not find here an exhaustive or systematic description of social relations that characterized the world of Paul's communities. The book comprises a useful and succinct outline of different currents of socio-scientific studies by Porter. Those who are interested will find there the most important works and authors, representing especially the socio-historical approach. Other groups are presented in a more modest and schematic manner. The polemic article by Mark Batluck is also well-balanced and well argued, suggesting a possible modification of Malina's polarized approach to collectivistic Mediterranean culture. The paper by James R. Harrison on the "living death" in Rome provides readers with a rich and intriguing background enabling us to understand the Pauline language of death in the Letter to the Romans. Next, the article by Andrew A. Pitts and Joshua F. Walker makes a very good case for the Pauline and Lukan authorship of the Letter to the Hebrews. Finally, the article by H.H. Drake Williams III dealing with the issue of honor, so popular and so readily examined in the New Testament literature and Paul, will surely meet with warm welcome of many readers.

Paul and His Social Relations presents the whole spectrum of characters and problems related to the apostle's social relations. It contains important methodological tips and warnings about how to creatively and fruitfully use various forms of socio-scientific methodology. In this sense, it is a good reading for both advanced researchers and those who are just beginning their adventure with socio-scientific studies. The great merit of this book consists in bringing us closer to the cultural milieu in which Paul and his communities functioned.