

*Philippians*. By Joseph H. Hellerman. Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament. Edited by Andreas J. Köstenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2015, 297 pp., \$29.99, softcover. ISBN 9781433676864.

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It is a rare accomplishment to produce both a technical, yet thoroughly-readable work dealing with the grammar and syntax of the eclectic Greek text (UBS<sup>5</sup>) of *Philippians*. However, Joseph Hellerman, Professor of New Testament Language and Literature at Talbot School of Theology, has done just that with *Philippians*. Hellerman's *Philippians* is comparable to Jerry Sumney's previous work (*Philippians: A Greek Student's Intermediate Reader*, Hendrickson 2007) and William Varner's upcoming contribution (*Philippians: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, BUP 2016), and seeks to "close the gap between the Greek text and the available tools" such as intermediate grammars and grammatical analyses (xvi).

In his introduction, Hellerman proffers a brief prolegomenon (six pages) to the introductory matters of *Philippians* before proceeding to guide his readers phrase-by-phrase in his detailed analyses of the Greek text (xvi). Structurally, Hellerman divides *Philippians* into five major sections (Phil 1:1–11, 12–26, 27–4:9, 10–20, 21–23) and eighteen text units (6). Thus, Hellerman argues for the unity of *Philippians*, and rejects the various partition theories of the late John Reumann et al (3). Hellerman sees Paul as the author, and argues for a Roman provenance for *Philippians* (3–4). *Philippians* is primarily a thanksgiving letter (1:3; 4:10–20), according to Hellerman (4), with various subthemes emerging throughout: admonition to remain faithful (1:27–30); disunity (2:1–4; 4:2–3); and false teaching (3:2, 18–19). Regarding linguistics, Hellerman distinguishes between semantics and pragmatics (i.e., between aspect and *Aktionsart*), and posits a rather caustic critique against the viability of rhetorical analyses of *Philippians* (4–6).

Hellerman's remaining pages examine the Greek text paragraph-by-paragraph, clause-by-clause. Methodologically, Hellerman begins each text unit with a structural analysis (block diagram) of the Greek text. He gives a brief overview of the text before proceeding to the phrase-by-phrase grammatical/syntactical/exegetical analyses. He provides a focused bibliography on specific issues in his "For Further Study" sections, and then offers "Homiletical Suggestions" that allow busy pastors to check their work and gain fresh insights. The "For Further Study" and "Homiletical Suggestions" sections help to bridge the gap between the descriptive and prescriptive elements of sermon preparation, and are valuable additions not found in Baylor's *Handbook* series.

Several strengths mark Hellerman's work. First, Hellerman's output is scholarly, but not dry; technical, yet informative and thoroughly engaging. Second, Hellerman's sociohistorical discussion of the Latin *cursus honorum* (i.e., "race of honor")—which Hellerman argues is being reversed by Paul/Jesus throughout *Philippians*—helps to bridge the gap between ancient text and contemporary congregations (4, 7, 106–07, 118, 156, 176, 187). Third, Hellerman is mostly fair and balanced in his approach, and sets forth the possible options for interpretation—thus, giving his readers a fully-orbed understanding of the issues involved.

However, Hellerman's work is not without faults. First, as in all the EGGNT series, the cryptic abbreviations for many of the grammatical/syntactical terms can be confusing at times. Moreover, Hebrew terms are superfluously transliterated (30, 178), and repeated terms are

underlined with a dotted line that is difficult to see. It would have been better to have simply bolded repeated words. Second, numerous typographical errors plague this work (see e.g., 135, 142, 179, 260). Third, while somewhat helpful, Hellerman perhaps overemphasizes extra-biblical, sociohistorical connections in *Philippians*, while underemphasizing the intertextual connections within Scripture, itself. Fourth, Hellerman caricatures rhetorical analysis as a “cottage industry in New Testament scholarship” (5), and proffers a cavalier dismissal regarding its viability as past proposals do not match exactly in a side-by-side comparison (5–6). This sting seems an unfair/unrealistic criterion to evaluate the usefulness of rhetorical analysis. In comparing Hellerman’s structural outline with those in numerous commentaries/articles, there is no unanimity there either—especially, regarding Hellerman’s decision to omit 1:12–26 from the letter’s body. Yet, structural outlines, including Hellerman’s, are still useful to scholars (hence, their inclusion in commentaries).

In sum, pastors, students, and informed laity will find Hellerman’s *Philippians* to be a helpful handmaiden in their exegetical toolbox, but this work is not intended to be a full-scale commentary (xvi) nor a replacement of one’s own exegetical/syntactical analysis of the text. Hellerman’s seeming overemphasis on extrabiblical resources and sociohistorical data should also give cautious scholars some pause. With these caveats in mind, this reviewer highly recommends *Philippians* and the rest of the EGGNT series as they fill an important lacuna in biblical studies through their synergistic union between the inductive and deductive elements of hermeneutics and sermonic development.