

Reading Philips' works raises several questions: In the face of external persecution, why did Anabaptists experience a tendency toward internal fission rather than fusion around their doctrinal core? Did their ethnic (Frisian/Flemish/Dutch) differences and their penchant for banning outweigh their commitment to truth? And why did persecution not make them less judgmental and more tolerant of others, as in the case of Roger Williams and the Quakers, for instance?

In closing, one notes that *The Writings of Dirk Philips* has been superbly edited; only two misspelled words and a hyphen escaped the copyreader's scrutiny. The book includes two indexes, three maps, explanatory endnotes, and an outstanding bibliography of 110 sources on Anabaptism. Perhaps wrapping its drab gray cover and black Gothic letters in a colorful dust jacket would have made this to me more appealing. But maybe this exterior plainness, like the drab Frisian dress and the simplicity of Dirk Philips' prose, best reflects the Mennonite image of a people apart from the world.

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Edwards, James P. *Romans*. New International Biblical Commentary. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992. Paperback 320 pp. \$9.95.

The New International Biblical Commentary Series, edited by Ward Gasque, represents "the best of contemporary scholarship presented in a form that does not require formal theological education to understand" (ix). James Edwards, Professor of Religion at Jamestown College in North Dakota, has done a superb job to bring this goal into reality. He has a knack for summarizing succinctly and clearly different views on an issue and also for clearly setting forth where he stands. While he is obviously indebted to previous commentaries and shows a thorough grasp of current scholarship on the book of Romans, Edwards clearly has his own understanding of the meaning of the book. His readers, though laypersons, will have as good an understanding of the book of Romans as seminary graduates, except that they will not have the background in the original language to check for themselves the original wording and meaning.

Throughout the commentary Edwards writes with clarity, providing apt illustrations and striking epigrams. Note the following examples in the first chapter: Rom 1:2, "Previously he had been a Pharisee separated *from* Gentiles; now he is separated *for* them!" (28). "For Paul the gospel was not something a person possesses, but rather something which possesses him." "Jesus Christ was the goal in a long history of salvation, the anchor runner, so to speak, in the divine relay from Abraham to the day of salvation" (29). On 1:18, "God's wrath is different. It is not an arbitrary nightmare of raw power" (49).

Throughout the commentary the setting Edwards envisages for the writing of the letter is the time after the death of Claudius (A.D. 41 to 54), when the Jews were returning to Rome. This is the context for the explanation of Roman 14-15, which he sees as a conflict between Jew (the weak) and Gentile (the strong).

Most commentators on Romans project on Paul a strong negative orientation toward the law. While Edwards recognizes that righteousness does not come through works, he does not take this to mean that Paul establishes "an antithesis, or worse, hostility, between righteousness and law as he does, for example, between spirit and flesh" (99). On the other hand Paul argues "that righteousness by faith is the necessary prerequisite to fulfil the intent of the law (e.g., 8:4)" (ibid.).

While the reviewer applauds Edwards for his lively style, clarity, and ability to set forth his own and others' positions without verbiage, obviously no commentator will find complete agreement with all scholars in his interpretation. At Rom 5:12 Edwards translates "because (of death) all sinned" rather than simply "because all sinned." The context seems to indicate that the reason "all men sinned" is that one man sinned. The point of vs. 13-14, therefore, seems to be simply that even though people did not sin as consciously as Adam did, they still died. They died simply because of Adam's sin.

Rom 7 has always occasioned differences of interpretation. Edwards sets up the usual options, pre-Christian or Christian experience. He opts for the Christian-experience view. One of the problems in the interpretation of this passage seems to be the limitation to only these two positions. Paul seems to indicate three stages. The first stage is indicated in 7:8, a life apart from the law; the second stage in 7:9-10, a life in which sin comes alive, awakened by the law, and Paul dies; the third stage in 7:25-26 and 8:1-4, a life in which the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus operates "so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us" (Rom 8:4). Rom 7:14-25 describes this second stage, technically still pre-Christian but not the pre-Christian of stage 1.

Differences in interpretation as shown above are expected and therefore do not in any way affect the quality of the book.

Other features enhance the book. There are additional notes for each chapter, which give more technical material and refer to other sources for further study, and a subject and scriptural index.