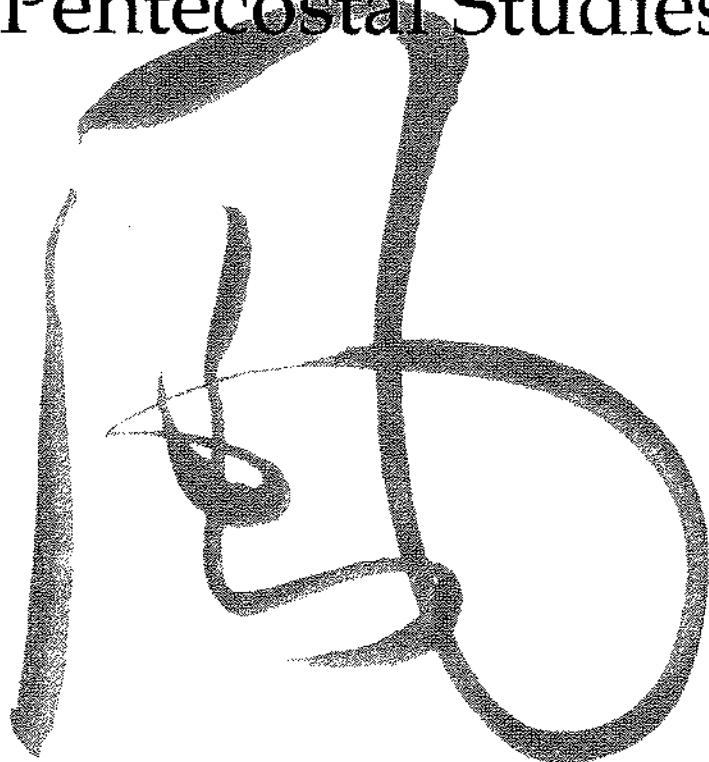


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Gordon D. Fee, *Galatians: Pentecostal Commentary*, Pentecostal Commentary Series—New Testament, ed. John Christopher Thomas. Blandford Forum, England: Deo Publishing, 2007. x + 262 pp.

The commentary of Prof. Gordon D. Fee in Galatians is a welcome contribution to the Pentecostal Commentary Series. Unlike other commentaries of Fee which are included in different New Testament commentary series where he engages with secondary literature, this work is a free exposition of his thoughts. He was able to bring the discussion of the epistle to the Galatians in the way he wanted to pursue it.

It is in a typical commentary format where Fee's introduction to his commentary on the text of Galatians includes discussion on "Authorship," "Who were the Galatians?," "Date and Place of Writing," "Occasion/Purpose and Opponents," "Galatians as a Letter," "The Holy Spirit in Galatians," and "An Outline of Galatians." The author divided the major sections of his commentary into six: [1]. "Galatians 1:1-9—Introductory Matters," [2]. "Galatians 1:11-2:21—Paul Defends Himself and His Gospel," [3]. Galatians 3:1-4:20—The First Argument from Scripture," [4]. Galatians 4:21-5:12—The Second Argument from Scripture," [5]. Galatians 5:13-6:10—The Spirit Supersedes the Law," and [6]. Galatians 6:11-18—Postscript: The Opponents One More Time."

Although the list of books in the bibliography is limited to eleven titles, Fee used more materials as is evident in the footnotes of the pages of his commentary. The indices of contemporary authors and scriptural passages are helpful to easily track major contributors and their interpretations of crucial passages in Galatians as well as the biblical references provide straightforward access to parallel passages.

In the preface, Fee notes his commitment to the Pentecostal belief as well as "openly confessing and practicing Pentecostal" tradition in his life while having a teaching career in evangelical schools. (vii) The preface of the author is important because he was able to make it clear that he does "not consider what follows [in his Galatians' commentary] to be *the* decisive commentary on Galatians from within [the Pentecostal tradition]. (viii) He also states clearly that the work is plainly presented "by a committed Pentecostal for others within [the Pentecostal] tradition" with the primary objective "to understand Paul's letter on its own terms, not in terms of a special agenda." (viii) The author maintains that "Galatians is one of the most thoroughly ad hoc documents in the New Testament; thus the level of understanding

between the author and readers is at the very highest level." (1) Fee follows the general agreement in the scholarly world that the epistle of Paul to the Galatians is an authentic one and authored by the apostle from beginning to end (2) However, he admits the difficulty of identifying the Galatian congregation of Paul accurately, either "ethnic Galatia" or "provincial Galatia" would bring problems. (3-4)

The proclivity of the author is the identification of the Galatian congregation in the south Galatian province since Barnabas was not with Paul in his visit to the provincial territory and thus the recipient of the epistle would not know Barnabas. (4) For Fee, Paul would have penned the epistle in the mid-50s CE, "roughly between 55 and 57." but to identify its origin accurately is like groping in the dark. He also sees that the issues of "circumcision," "Sabbath," and "food laws" are the matters that concerned Paul and why he wrote the letter to the Galatian people at the southern part of the province as the Judaizers agitated the situation in Galatia. (5-6) As a letter with a specific purpose, the author notes his reservation in using classical rhetorical convention to sort out the outline of Galatians. (6-7) Fee also traces important passages on the role of the Spirit in Christian life and views that "the Spirit is the key to everything" that is genuine in the faith of those who believe. (9)

One of the features of Fee's commentary, being a well known textual critic, is his discussion of textual criticism in his footnotes. One example would be enough to represent the clarity of the author's mind in making a textual decision to contribute in understanding the text of the epistle in a better way. In his discussion of Gal. 1:4, he dealt with the textual problem where he pinpoints the prepositions *hyper* (commonly = "in behalf of") and *peri* (commonly = "concerning") appear in different manuscript evidences. However, the English renditions would not indicate any distinction in the variation of readings. It is simply expressed as "for our sins." Fee notes the ambiguity of the idiom in English. After discussing the issues involved on how to decide what would be the superior reading between competing variants, he argues that "Paul in this one instance wrote [*peri*] under the influence of the Septuagint." (19-20, footnote 21) Here the textual decision of Fee is very helpful because he provides a reasonable basis on what he views as a superior reading of the text.

Another outstanding quality of Fee's commentary on Galatians is the way he follows the sustained argument of Paul until the end. (see 248-56) This approach brings the understanding of the epistle as a unified whole. The author pursues the textual flow of the apostle's

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train of thought from salutation to conclusion. As a case in point, Fee in his comment on Gal. 5:13-6:10 traces the train of thought of Paul from the previous chapters. (see 200 ff.) He disputes the historical understanding that is frequently taken for granted by the interpreters that the 5" and 6" chapters of Galatians are "ethical instruction."

For Fee, the textual flow brought him to the conclusion that "this section as a whole is much better understood as bringing the *argument* of Galatians to its proper conclusion." (200) He contends that the purpose of these last two chapters is the answer to the question the apostle Paul raised in Gal. 3:3: "Having *begun* by the Spirit, do you now *come to completion* by the flesh?" (200) Fee is explicit in his presentation of the argument of Paul that the key to everything in Christian life is the Spirit. He maintains that "the Spirit effectively replaces the Torah" (207)

A reader receives much benefit in following the way the author lays down the structural flow of the apostle's sustained argument in Galatians. This means that this *Galatians: Pentecostal Commentary* does not only convey to the reader "what Fee has to say" (1) on certain passages, but rather the author provides a framework on how the epistle is to be properly read according to its literary context.

Fee's commentary also features a reflection and response at the end of every major section of his work. This is most helpful because the exposition of the passage on hand has an explanation that brings the message of the Galatians' text applicable to the contemporary context of the readers. One example of this unique feature of the commentary on the reflection part is the important point that the author maintains in Galatians 1 & 2, "Paul is obviously appealing to his situation as a special case, and therefore none of us is in position to 'emulate' him on these matters, even if we have had prophetic or visionary calls. Paul considers his calling to be unique and yet of the same order as the original apostles.

What we are to learn about the apostle from this long narrative is that, by a calling that was uniquely Paul's own, we Gentiles owe an enormous debt of gratitude to God for our own existence, which was basically fought and won by the Apostle over the issues raised in Galatians 2." (96) Another example, which is in the response segment of the commentary, is the series of questions that are giving an opportunity for the reader to pause and think about the significance of Fee's questions: "How might I more consciously become a Spirit-person, both in my relationship with God as my heavenly *Abba* and with others? Do I really believe that the Spirit is the absolutely central

'ingredient' of life in Chnst, or is he merely an 'add-on'? ....So what, in fact and practice, does it mean for me to be a Spirit-person, both in the church and in the world?" (173) It is noteworthy to pay attention to what Fee is asking and apply the message of Galatians to one's own Christian faith.

The treatment of the subject of the Holy Spirit is of special interest to the readers of the commentary series as the primary target readers are the Pentecostal-Charismatic Christian groups. Fee's exposition of the subject of the Spirit is coherent. His commentary as a whole is readable. Perhaps, one of the best representatives of this feature of Fee's commentary is his treatment of the most quoted passage in Galatians about the fruit of the Spirit. In his discussion of the fruit of the Spirit he reiterated again that the Spirit substituted the Torah. (see 216-24)

Once, again, Fee, following Paul's train of thought in the whole of Galatians substantially expounded on the nine fruit of the Spirit and asserts "that the work of Christ and the coming of the Spirit have eliminated Torah altogether from the agenda of God's people." (224) All throughout his commentary, Fee is consistent in his argument that the Spirit, i.e. the Chnstian life in the Spirit, replaces a person's life that adheres to the Torah. It is also noteworthy to mention that in the six parts of the "Reflection and Response" sections of the commentary the author relates the Christian life with the work of the Spirit.

The *Galatians: Pentecostal Commentary* is a work that accomplishes its existence for being. It is meant to be a work of a prime New Testament exegete who turns out to be a Pentecostal (vii) and the author's contribution to the growing secondary literature in Galatians is a commentary based on reliable interpretation of Paul in his own language that is sensitive in the way the great apostle to the Gentiles taught the person and work of the Holy Spirit. (cf. viii)

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