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## Gooch, PARTIAL KNOWLEDGE: PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES IN PAUL

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## BOOK REVIEWS

*Partial Knowledge: Philosophical Studies in Paul*, by Paul W. Gooch. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1987. Pp. viii and 200. \$22.50.

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It is a common confession of philosophers who are orthodox Christians that Scripture rightly interpreted and true philosophy are in harmony and not in conflict. Given this near-truism, one might reasonably expect to find a considerable number of studies working out the harmony in detail, showing how matters stand for particular passages of Scripture and particular lines of philosophical reflection. One might expect this—but only if one has not tried to find the books! In fact, not only do most biblical scholars ignore philosophy, but even believing philosophers tend either to allude to Scripture in very general terms, or to cite individual passages with little regard for the broader scholarly context of biblical studies. Upon reflection, perhaps this dearth of serious integration between philosophy and biblical studies is not so surprising. Both of these disciplines have formidable tool-kits which must be mastered by their practitioners, and there is not a great deal of overlap between the two kits. To ask that one scholar become proficient in both sets of skills is to ask a great deal.

Paul W. Gooch, however, has crossed the gap from the side of philosophy in *Partial Knowledge*, his philosophical study of Pauline teaching in I Corinthians. His knowledge of biblical scholarship is impressive, and while he does not contribute to Pauline exposition on the “micro-level”—he does not suggest novel readings or new ways of parsing Paul’s sentences—he does have much of value to offer concerning the broad interpretive framework for the passages of I Corinthians he addresses. In an introductory chapter, “Paul and Philosophy,” Gooch explains his approach in the book: he will not examine Paul’s relationship to the ancient philosophers, nor does he treat Paul as a “crypto-philosopher” who provides the materials for us to assemble into a philosophical system. What he does, rather, is examine a series of passages in I Corinthians which do raise significant philosophical issues; in the process, “philosophy is used as a tool upon an important biblical text in order to expose facets of its meaning” (p. 11).

In Ch. 2 Gooch deals with “Faith, Wisdom, and Philosophy” in I Corinthians 1-4. Here Paul mounts an attack on “worldly wisdom” which is often taken as a general rejection and repudiation of philosophy. In the conclusion of a careful, detailed textual study Gooch states that “whatever faults the Corinthians suffered from, Paul cannot be criticizing them for the very use

of reason in the service of faith. For we have seen that, however content is assigned to worldly wisdom, Paul's critique cuts not at reason itself but at its inflated pretender—intellectual conceit" (p. 46).

Following Chapter 3 on the resurrection, there are three chapters dealing with broadly ethical aspects of Paul's thought. The character of Paul's ethical reasoning is considered in Ch. 4, "Ethical Authorities: I Corinthians 7"; Ch. 5 deals with "The Burden of the Weak: I Corinthians 8-10"; and Ch. 6, "For and Against Accommodation: I Corinthians 9:19-23," considers the meaning of Paul's claim to be "all things to all men." In all of these chapters the textual and philosophical analysis is insightful and the conclusions, while not uncontroversial, are convincingly supported.

The title chapter is the seventh and last: "Partial Knowledge: I Corinthians 13." The point of departure, of course, is Paul's dictum that "we know in part" (I Cor. 13:9; RSV, "our knowledge is imperfect"). Gooch explores with care and insight the ways in which this is true, and concludes:

If on occasion we are moved to love in adoration, there are other times and places in which we cannot find anything of God's goodness to call forth that love. Our apprehension is so partial and imperfect that we may be tempted in particularly grim circumstances to believe that God is not for us but against us. And in such trial, ... believers are called upon to accept God unconditionally, when they cannot understand what good God may intend, or even approve of what they now seem to see ... Only when we arrive will faith find its vindication and love be complete. Right now we are still a long way from home. (p. 161)

I have reserved for final, and more critical, comment Ch. 3, "Disembodied Persons and Pauline Resurrection: I Corinthians 15." Here Gooch juxtaposes contemporary views concerning the mind-body problem and the nature of life after death with Paul's teaching on the resurrection.<sup>1</sup> He sets out four possibilities for resurrected persons, as follows:

1. A resurrected body might be *just the same as* the body in this life, without any change of properties between these two states....
2. A second option is that the resurrection body may be the same antemortem body that has *changed* to some extent....
3. It is also possible to claim that a particular resurrection body corresponds to an antemortem body when the resurrection body is *radically dissimilar* to the earlier one....
4. [I]t is at least possible that in the resurrection the dead will not have physical bodies at all, but will be disembodied persons. (p. 62f.)

On the basis of the Pauline text, Gooch dismisses the first option immediately, and more cautiously the second as well: Neither view does justice to the radical change apparently called for by I Cor. 15:35-50. The third option, on the other hand, does include the idea of radical change. (A caveat here: Inasmuch as the difference between Gooch's second and third options is

essentially one of degree, it would seem difficult to distinguish sharply between them with regard to compatibility with the text.) Gooch then says, "On the basis of Paul's text alone, I find myself unable to give an unhesitating yes to the crucial question that would move us decisively from option 3 to option 4 in the resurrection possibilities" (p. 69). Nevertheless, he claims that "it is legitimate to read what he did write as compatible with option 4," and that in Paul's statements about the resurrection "there can be found very little to deny that resurrection may be to disembodied personal life, and much to suggest it" (pp. 69, 70).

The supporting discussion can't be considered in detail here, but a few points may be mentioned: Gooch maintains that *soma*, in Paul's usage, need not mean "body"; rather the word is stretched so as to mean a "bare subject": it "is strongly suggestive...of our concepts of 'thing' or 'individual'" (p. 68). He rejects the argument that his view requires him to "spiritualize" Christ's resurrection as well. On the contrary, Christ's resurrection (which, following the Gospels, Gooch accepts as "physical, something like my option 2" (p. 76)) need not be the same as the Pauline resurrection of I Cor. 15; *that* resurrection corresponds rather to Christ's ascension to heaven, which Gooch interprets as the translation to a glorified, disembodied state. To Reichenbach's objection that, since we all become disembodied persons immediately at death, there is no need or room for any future general resurrection, Gooch replies that this would follow from his view only "if personal consciousness, memories, and the like, were somehow inherently indestructible, but I have not asserted that" (p. 77). This leaves Gooch free to hold that we are annihilated at death and then subsequently "resurrected" to disembodied existence, a view which nicely combines the philosophical difficulties of disembodiment with those of temporally discontinuous existence.

On some of these points Gooch does not seem to be following the flow of Paul's writing to see where it leads (as he does elsewhere in the book), so much as seeing what the text will allow him to say without actually contradicting it. But what are his reasons for favoring the option of disembodiment? One reason is that a bodily resurrection leads to undignified questions about "the sex and age and size of new bodies...there is an uncomfortableness about questions concerning haircuts in heaven or artificial limbs in the life to come" (pp. 58f.). But these difficulties, even if taken seriously, are insufficient to warrant the conclusion: it is excessive to avoid the haircut by removing the head!

The other reason is that, if resurrected persons are embodied, there will still be an "epistemological gap" between them and God and their knowledge of God will not be satisfactory: "if we keep our resurrected persons much like those in our present world, I suspect that their epistemological structure and capabilities will be too much like ours to fit them for heaven" (p. 60).

This, if true, is a serious problem—but why suppose that it is true? Gooch has an argument on this point dealing with the conditions in John Hick's postulated state of "eschatological verification"; he claims that "Hick's resurrection world works best where it is as much as possible like our present world in its ontology and epistemology" (p. 58).<sup>2</sup> But while this may be true it isn't enough to support Gooch's position; what he needs is a *general* argument showing that *no* embodied state can possibly allow for an adequate knowledge of God. (Such an argument would presumably apply to the incarnate Christ and would show that he, also, had no adequate knowledge of God during the time of his embodiment. It is possible that Gooch would accept this.) General arguments of this sort are, of course, available within the Platonic tradition, but Gooch shows no sign of wanting to avail himself of such help. But lacking any such argument, his general claim about embodiment and knowledge of God remains unsupported.

In spite of these disagreements, *Partial Knowledge* deserves high praise, both as an example of a kind of book that needs to be written but usually is not, and because of the intrinsic merits of its content. It is highly recommended for biblical scholars, for theologians, and in particular for the readers of *Faith and Philosophy*.

#### NOTES

1. On this see also Gooch's "The Pauline Concept of the Resurrection Body," *Crux* 8 (1970-71), pp. 18-29; "On Disembodied Resurrected Persons: A Study in the Logic of Christian Eschatology," *Religious Studies* 17 (1981), pp. 199-213; Bruce Reichenbach, "On Disembodied Resurrected Persons: A Reply," *Religious Studies* 18 (1982), pp. 225-29; and Paul W. Gooch, "Reply to Professor Reichenbach," *Religious Studies* 18 (1982), pp. 231-32.

2. For the argument see, "On Disembodied Resurrected Persons," pp. 200-4.

*William Ockham*, by Marilyn McCord Adams. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987. Pp. xx and 1402. \$96.00.

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Marilyn McCord Adams' *William Ockham* is a monumental work that became on its publication necessary reading for anyone interested in the thought of the Venerable Inceptor. In these two volumes Adams set herself the daunting task of extracting from the whole corpus of William Ockham's extant writings the operating principles of his thought, covering ontology, logic, and theory of knowledge in the first volume, natural philosophy and theology in the second. Of particular moment to readers will be her assumption that Ockham's thought begins in his ontology, her treatment of Ockham and Scotus on identity and individuation, her discussions of similarity and