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A Pentecostal Commentary on Romans

Introduction, Translation, and Commentary

Glen W. Menzies

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In a field dominated mainly by Reformed and Catholic readings of Paul’s letter to the Romans, Glen W. Menzies’ Pentecostal commentary offers a fresh translation, careful exegesis, and several useful excurses on the significant issues within Romans.

In *A Pentecostal Commentary on Romans*, Menzies engages the reader from the outset with a fresh unpacking of the term “Pentecostal”. He argues that there is no unified Pentecostal view of Romans and hopes that all streams of the church can make use of his commentary. Menzies provides an introduction in which he discusses all of the contextual details relevant to Romans, an overview of the new perspective on Paul, and a small section on the new perspective of an adjacent scholar, John M. Barclay. This introduction helps set the tone for the remainder of the commentary. Menzies argues that his commentary situates his interpretation from both the old (i.e., scholars such as Luther) and new perspectives in Pauline studies.

Following the introduction, Menzies proceeds through the letter to the Romans, offering his own translation, commentary, and a theological reflection, most of which are in the form of

excurses on differing issues. Although the inclusion of an excursus within a commentary is not original to Menzies, I found these incredibly beneficial as they were able to expand on many topics throughout the letter. One of which is Paul's language of righteousness and justification, and aspects of the speech-act theory. Menzies gives over 19 pages of explanation and discussion to this topic, offering an overview of N.T. Wright's stance on Paul's use of the δικαιο- words (δικαιοσύνη, δικαιόω, and δίκαιος) in Romans. He illustrates Wright's approach with Roman 5:7, where the framework works well, yet Menzies expresses reservations about some features of Wright's presentation and argues that in other contexts, such as the LXX Deuteronomy 9:5, it does not work as well. In the end, Menzies concluded that he honoured nuance over consistency with the translation of the δικαιο-words. This is not revolutionary; however, it is open to criticism.

Menzies' exegesis of Romans 8 includes comparing Pauline and Lukan pneumatology. In this section, Menzies gifts his audience with a discussion on two of the most distinctive doctrines of classical Pentecostal theology – the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues as evidence of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Both are spoken based on how Luke presents the Spirit in the book of Acts. He argues that “while Paul accepts that the Spirit can confer spiritual gifts on those who are already in Christ – he provides lists of such gifts in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 – in Romans 8, he more fundamentally insists that the internal presence of the Spirit is a necessary component of one's identity in Christ. This is an important difference from the presentation found in Acts.” Menzies argues that Pauline and Lukan pneumatology teachings are essential for fully presenting the matter in New Testament studies – a position that reflects his broader goal of integrating his Pentecostal experience with sound exegesis.

While Menzies work is engaging and theologically rich, it does not engage with the breadth of Pauline scholarship as much as the more technical commentaries do, which makes it less useful

for academic use. This limitation, however, does little to detract from the overall value of the commentary and value for Menzies intended audience.

Overall, I found Menzie's commentary stimulating and enjoyable. He broadened my thinking on a few topics, particularly within the excursus on Romans 11:25–26 (All Israel will be saved), where he gave an overview of the four main approaches and the role of Israel today. Menzies also included a somewhat limited yet necessary discussion on dispensationalism. He does well to highlight that dispensationalism holds to an entirely futuristic eschatology, denying that the kingdom is yet to begin functioning, and in contrast, many Pentecostals embrace inaugurated eschatology – the idea that the kingdom has already begun, but in more of a hidden form, and that will eventually come in full power and visibility. Personally, I found this to be an enlightening discussion on the topic.

I also found the moments Menzies chose to expand on a contemporary application of certain aspects of the letter well executed. Although these applications could have been more consistent throughout the commentary, the times he did insert an application were positive. For example, Paul highlights welcoming those who may have differing opinions on particular behaviours in Romans 14–15. Menzies argues that the principles that Paul underlines about disagreements over certain behaviours are very much applicable to the contemporary church. He insists that while there are non-negotiable fundamentals of faith, there is a tendency to elevate marginal matters to an unjustified prominence and therefore an inclination to condemn others for not holding that same opinion. This is one of Menzies' observations that I wholeheartedly agree with. It is these types of observations that I believe will help the church immensely, and therefore, this commentary will be extremely valuable for pastors and bible study leaders.

His engagement with the Greek text was also beneficial to his audience. He did not overcomplicate his translation explanations and used the excursus to discuss the primary debates within scholarship when necessary. Again, this approach serves his target audience well, but, personally, I would have appreciated a fuller discussion within his commentary about his translation decisions. For example, returning to the excursus about Paul's use of the δικαιο- words, I would have appreciated knowing what other scholars other than N.T. Wright have said on this topic.

With Menzies' thoughtful theological reflections and his approach to the letter through a Pentecostal lens, this commentary will complement many pastors, students, and non-specialist collections.