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The Corinthian Correspondence: Redaction, Rhetoric, and History. By Frank W. Hughes and Robert Jewett. Pp. 354. Minneapolis: Fortress Academic, 2021. ISBN 9781978705 197 and 203. Hardback \$120.00; e-book \$45.00.

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There is a long-standing and widely held view in New Testament scholarship that 2 Corinthians is a composite of letter fragments, estimates of the number of such fragments varying from two to nine. In this book—the result of a friendship and conversation about the Corinthian correspondence between Frank Hughes and Robert Jewett going back to 1982—the authors accept this view and build on it to argue that 1 Corinthians is also such a composite. They further propose that what we have as canonical 1 and 2 Corinthians is an integrated combination of eight Pauline epistles to Corinth produced between 90 and 110 CE in pioneering codex form ‘in the struggle against early heresy among Jesus-believers’ that ‘required publication in redacted form that would replace the most dangerous Pauline letters that were being employed by teachers perceived to be heretics’ (259). By bringing 1 Corinthians into the discussion so thoroughly, the authors probably represent the high-water mark in the application of partition theories to the Corinthian correspondence.

It is convenient to note here that Appendix IV (275-307) contains their translation of what they regard as the eight original Pauline letters to Corinth (which they number A-H), as follows:

- A. 2 Cor 11.2, 17–34a + 1 Cor 11.3–16 + 1 Cor 16.1–4 + 1 Cor 11.34b.
- B. 2 Cor 6.14–7.1 + 1 Cor 6.12–20 + 1 Cor 9.24–10.22 + 1 Cor 15.1–58 + 1 Cor 16.13–24.
- C. 1 Cor 1.1–6.11 + 1 Cor 7.1–8.13 + 1 Cor 9.19–23 + 1 Cor 10.23–11.1 + 1 Cor 12.1–31a + 1 Cor 14.1c–33a + 1 Cor 14.37–40 + 1 Cor 12.31b–13.13 + 1 Cor 16.5–12.
- D. 2 Cor 8.1–24
- E. 2 Cor 2.14–6.13 + 2 Cor 7.2–4
- F. 2 Cor 10.1–11.9 + 1 Cor 9.1–18 + 2 Cor 11.10–13.10
- G. 2 Cor 1.1–2.13 + 7.5–16 + 13.11–13
- H. 2 Cor 9.1–15

Chapter 1, their brief introduction (3–10), outlines the argument and makes a case for the importance of both rhetorical and redaction criticism in understanding the Pauline correspondence. Chapter 2 (11–42) rehearses and endorses partition approaches to 2 Corinthians, and largely accounts for its present appearance as the result of redactional pressures to deal with theological and ecclesiological pressures in the late first and early second centuries. Chapter 3, entitled ‘The Need to Partition

1 Corinthians' (43–83), points to seventeen (alleged) 'rough transitions' in the text (e.g. 6.11–6.12; 6.20–7.1; 8.13–9.1; 15.58–16.1) and 'logical and historical contradictions' as providing the necessary evidentiary basis. The 'most significant' of such contradictions is that 'Paul knows less about the situation in 1 Corinthians 11 than he does in chapters 1 through 4, so that the question of how one can "unknow" something needs to be confronted' (55). This latter point essentially involves the issue of reconciling what Paul says about divisions in the Corinthian church in 1 Cor 1.10–13 with his (possibly) more positive view of them in 1 Cor 11.18–19 (153, 160). In this chapter the authors next discuss existing partition theories for 1 Corinthians (58–66), before detailing their own 'partition hypothesis', including the provenance of the various parts (67–77). Chapter 4 (85–103) sets out the authors' proposal for the redactional processes that led to the various separate Pauline letters they identify ending up in 1 Corinthians.

In Chapters 5–12 (107–239) the authors proceed through each of the eight letters they have isolated, in each case offering detailed rhetorical analysis of the contents of the letter and assessing its provenance. Chapter 13 (241–252) is entitled 'Redirecting Paul's Ministry' and seeks to explain how and why what we know as 1 and 2 Corinthians were produced in the late first or early second century CE from Paul's postulated eight letters, especially in response to emerging heresies, and how this process relates to data in the Pastoral Letters and Ephesians. Chapter 14 (255–262) contains a reflection on how their thesis relates to the question of the adoption of the codex form by the early Christ-movement. There are four Appendices (265–307): I, 'Summary of the Jewett-Hughes Partition Theory in Relation to 1 and 2 Corinthians'; II: 'Schematic Representations of the Redactional Process'; III: 'Previous Partition and Redaction Theories'; and IV, noted above.

This book is a model of bold, innovative and fair-minded scholarship, with numerous fresh exegetical ideas appearing throughout. Nevertheless, given the authors' industry and analytical abilities, and his long friendship with the late Robert Jewett (whose work he has found inspirational for decades), it grieves the present reviewer to say that he finds its argument entirely unpersuasive.

The principal issue is its foundational investment in partition theories relating to 2 Corinthians. An increasing number of interpreters (including the present reviewer, in his *2 Corinthians: A Social Identity Commentary* [London: T & T Clark, 2021]) are finding this approach a dead end. Only a flavour of this discussion can be mentioned here. The authors rightly recognise that the main reason offered for initiating the process of partitioning 2 Corinthians is the transition from 2 Corinthians 9 to 10, that is, the movement from consolation in the earlier chapters to the severity of 10–13. They say:

It is fundamentally difficult to imagine that anyone with sense (*sic*) of how persuasion worked would have written a letter about reconciliation at the beginning of the letter, using the topics of consolation, which were well known in the ancient world, and then in the very same letter, launch a bombastic attack on the very congregation for whose recent correction and reconciliation with himself he has just given thanks (5).

Well, St John Chrysostom knew how persuasion worked in the ancient world (far better than any modern critic can ever hope to); he was the most accomplished orator in the early church. Yet he described the transition from (what is now called) Chapters 9 to 10 as executed *eukairôs*, 'opportunistically' (Esler, *2 Corinthians*, 18). *Sed ubi scribitur* that a speaker could not take up different issues in the same discourse? Greek orators regularly did. Paul himself makes clear he is turning to a new issue in 2 Cor 10.1 by his use of the formal expression *Autos de egô Paulos* ('I Paul myself'), where the use of the double pronoun is a *hapax legomenon* and remarkably emphatic. The new area to which he is proceeding is not, moreover, an attack on the Corinthians but on the interlopers who have arrived among them and to whom the Corinthians have, frustratingly for Paul, paid some attention. Finally, in numerous ways Paul has stitched Chapters 1-9 together with Chapters 10-13. The most obvious of these is that his rebuke of the 'peddlers of God's word' in 2 Cor 2.17 finds fuller explanation in Cor 11.7-15; in 2.17, therefore, he is paving the way for what he will say later. Similarly, 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 comprise a tightly integrated passage on the collection; nor is there any repetition across these chapters (a point frequently made by partitionists). There is, for example, no parallel to 8.7-12 in Chapter 9, a rather serious omission since this is the only place in 8-9 where Paul actually asks the Corinthians to participate in the collection! On the other hand, 9.6-15 (two-thirds of the chapter) read extremely well as providing extra support for the request made only in 8.7-12.

The major systemic weaknesses of the partition approach to 2 Corinthians (apart from knowing more than Chrysostom about the practice of ancient rhetoric) are the failure to attend to the ways in which Paul integrates the argument and recourse to captious claims of inconsistency between its various parts. The latter are typically based on a failure to attend closely enough to the local contexts in the letter in which the two allegedly inconsistent statements are found and which always prove to have alternative explanations once those contexts are duly considered.

The authors unfortunately succumb to these weaknesses and then apply the same type of reasoning to 1 Corinthians. Let us take one example, the alleged inconsistency between what Paul says about divisions in 1 Cor 1.10-13 and 1 Cor 11.18-19 (*supra*). Margaret Mitchell is an eminent advocate of the partition approach to 2 Corinthians, with her hypothesis that the text represents five letters having wide currency. Yet even Mitchell does not recognise any inconsistency here. She convincingly suggests that in 2 Cor 11.18-19 Paul is speaking of divisions when the Corinthians come together in an assembly; in 2 Cor 1 he has in mind relations among Christ-followers within the larger social context of the city of Corinth (*Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* [Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991]; 151-152). In other words, a possible difficulty disappears if the respective contexts are taken into account. The eight alleged Pauline letters identified by the authors are the fruit of this flawed methodology being applied again and again on the different parts of 1 Corinthians. Accordingly, it is difficult, for example, to share the confidence with which the authors have distinguished the nine separate fragments that they have combined, in a particular order, to form their Letter C. In short, repeating the 2 Corinthians partition approach on 1 Corinthians is to pile Pelion upon Ossa.

It is worthwhile to end with what is at stake with the whole partition approach to Paul. If its advocates are wrong, and we essentially have 1 and 2 Corinthians as Paul wrote them, following their view means abandoning any hope of understanding the totality of what Paul (rather than hypothesised unknown editor fifty years later) was seeking to communicate. If each of these letters had some pervasive communicative purpose, we will never know what it was. Replacing Paul as the author of canonical 1 and 2 Corinthians matters, historically and theologically. It is an enterprise that has been attempted by many talented exegetes, including Hughes and Jewett, but, fortunately, has failed. Is it time to move on?