

*Philo and Paul among the Sophists*, by Bruce W. Winter. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 96. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Pp. xvi + 289.\*

In this book, Dr. Winter, warden of Tyndale House in Cambridge, England, gathers the available evidence on the first-century sophistic movement, focusing on the two centers of learning, Alexandria and Corinth, and the two towering first-century Jewish writers, Philo and Paul. The roots of this little-known movement are found in the second half of the fifth century B.C., predating Plato and Aristotle. By the first century A.D., the term was used "to designate those rhetoricians whose ability in oratory was such that they could both secure a public following and attract students to their schools" (pp. 3-4). In his own day Philo could observe that the sophists were "winning the admiration of city after city, . . . and drawing well-nigh the whole world to honour them" (*Agr.* 143). According to Winter, training in rhetoric was regarded as essential preparation for a young man seeking to enter professional or political life. Sophists schooled potential leaders in the fine art of persuasion by teaching them rules on style and management of voice and body.

While most of Winter's treatment is highly technical, certain sections are more easily accessible and relevant for the study of the New Testament. This pertains particularly to chapter 8 through 10, titled respectively: "Paul and Sophistic Conventions," "Paul's Critique of the Corinthian Sophistic Tradition," and "Paul among the Christian Sophists." In these sections, Winter argues persuasively that Paul's critique of Corinthian sophists in 1 Corinthians 1-4, especially 2:1-5, spelled trouble for the apostle and led these highly sophisticated opponents to retaliate. Paul's response to this, according to Winter, is found in 2 Corinthians 10 through 13. While Paul was certainly capable of using rhetoric himself when it suited his purposes (e.g., Romans 6-7 or 2 Corinthians 10-13), he was concerned that his converts not be drawn in by human wisdom or eloquence but by the power of God displayed in Christ's cross and resurrection. This, in turn, drew the ire of his Corinthian opponents who preferred the orator Apollos over Paul the writer. In the end, Winter concludes that, although both Philo and Paul "had participated in the *Greek paideia* [education] on which the sophistic movement thrived, and were 'among the sophists' in first-century Alexandria and Corinth, for the most fundamental of theological reasons neither could ever be one of them" (p. 244). Overall, the highly technical nature of Winter's work will prove to limit its accessibility. Nevertheless, this work is recommended for serious students of the background to Paul in general and to 1 and 2 Corinthians in particular.

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