

## Preface

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The present book is the product of my experience teaching the course on the *Corpus Paulinum* at the Pontifical Urban University and of my work as a member of the Committee for the Institutes Affiliated to the Faculty of Theology in that University. However, this book is addressed not only to the students of these institutions but also to all those who are following an introductory course on Paul and his letters in other universities or theological institutions, and also, more generally, to those who are simply interested in getting to know the Apostle and his writings. The book has an international readership in mind which is why it provides a bibliography in several languages to encourage further study<sup>1</sup>.

The volume is divided into three parts: an introductory section, dealing with the biography, identity and writings of Paul; an exegetical section which introduces the individual letters and offers an analysis of various passages from them; and a theological section devoted to Paul's thought and its key themes. The structure of the book follows a pedagogic-didactic arrangement which is also found in other introductions to the Pauline *oeuvre*. However, this work has its own originality: of the three sections, the exegetical is the principal part, the most extended and developed, something which is usually not the case in other such works. This choice arises from the conviction that a course on the *Corpus Paulinum* should not be primarily an introduction to the writings *on* Paul but rather to the writings *of* Paul (which also means focusing chiefly on the letters unanimously considered authentic). I am convinced, therefore, that the aim of my teaching and so of the related book is that of providing the most appropriate tools so that each student can come close to the writings of the Apostle and understand them. If direct contact with the letters can only be primary, then the reader is invited to use this book keeping at hand the texts of the letters which it is intended to interpret<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Bearing in mind this is a textbook, the bibliography is necessarily selective. Among the texts cited, preference has been afforded to the most recent so that, through them, the reader can go back to all the more important contributions of the past. Apart from the general list at the beginning, the end of each section provides a specific bibliography with the works of the authors mentioned in the section and with the most recent and up-to-date contributions.

<sup>2</sup> The translations of the biblical texts quoted are the joint work of the author and translator.

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The present English edition of our manual is not just a translation of the original. Rather, the text has been revised thoroughly and the bibliography updated. Also, an entire section has been devoted to the exegesis of the text of Eph 2:11-22. We hope that, in this way, the book can turn out to be even more useful for the reader.

*F.B.*