



# **Paul's Understanding of the Church's Mission: Did the Apostle Paul Expect the Early Christian Communities to Evangelize? (Paternoster Biblical Monographs)**

*By Robert L. Plummer*

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Did Paul expect his churches to engage in evangelistic activity which mirrored his own? Or have modern readers of the Bible wrongly projected Paul's apostolic passion upon the communities that he founded? Such is the charge of several recent authors, and if their thesis is correct nothing could have larger implications for how the modern church engages in mission. In this book, Robert L. Plummer engages in a careful study of Paul's letters to determine if the apostle expected the communities to which he wrote to engage in outward-directed missionary activity. Plummer helpfully summarizes the discussion to date on the debated issue, judiciously handles contested texts, and provides a way forward in addressing this critical question. While admitting that Paul rarely explicitly commands the communities he founded to evangelize, Plummer amasses significant incidental data to provide a convincing case that Paul did indeed expect his churches to engage in outward-directed missionary activity. Throughout the study, Plummer progressively builds a theological basis for the church's mission that is both compelling and distinctively Pauline.

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### Review

"This is a clearly and simply written account offering a significant fresh angle on the subject."

**-I. Howard Marshall**, Honorary Research Professor of New Testament, University of Aberdeen, UK

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### Review

"Robert Plummer's new monograph infuses fresh biblical data into a field too often informed by long-held convictions that lack adequate scriptural support. Plummer's emphasis on the power of the self-diffusive Word of God and on the church's corporate missionary nature provides a much-needed corrective to currently held paradigms and points the way forward to a more biblical, and hence more God-pleasing and effective, engagement of the church in its God-assigned mission." Andreas J. Kostenberger, Professor of New Testament and Greek, Director of PhD and ThM Studies, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and author of 'Salvation to the Ends of the Earth' "Plummer investigates a topic that is often neglected in Pauline studies, and demonstrates that Paul expected the churches he established to engage in mission. His work is creative but also reflects a sound reading of Pauline texts." Thomas R. Schreiner, Professor of New Testament, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and author of Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ "Dr. Plummer offers a helpful contribution to the ongoing debate regarding the evangelistic mission carried out by the Pauline churches with his argument that the gospel itself functioned as a powerful force to carry along the evangelism in the early Christian communities. This is a clearly and simply written account offering a significant fresh angle on the subject." I. Howard Marshall, Honorary Research Professor of New Testament, University of Aberdeen, and author of 'Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts' "Dr. Plummer's significant work addresses the important but much disputed question as to whether the apostle Paul expected his churches and believers within them to be engaged in the ongoing task of evangelism. He claims that 'Paul's understanding of the gospel as the dynamic, effective word of God . . . provides the theological basis for a continuity of the mission between the apostles and the churches.' A former missionary who is interested in a biblical theology of mission, Dr. Plummer writes charitably as he subjects a range of views to careful, exegetical, and theological critique. This is a fine book that will be welcomed by students of the New Testament and its mission." Peter. T. O'Brien, Senior Research Fellow in New Testament, Moore College, Sydney, Australia

### From the Back Cover

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