Covering all of the Pauline letters whose authenticity is disputed by modern scholars (Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, and the Pastoral Epistles) as well as the letter to the Hebrews (previously attributed to Paul), Malina and Pilch guide their readers into a reading process oriented by social structures and cultural norms from the first century CE. The authors intend this study to supplement traditional commentaries, and it consists of two parts: textual notes and reading scenarios. Each chapter begins with an outline of the text followed by a translation (NRSV) with brief explanatory notes, presented section by section. (The sections on the Pastorals are disproportionately substantial, constituting nearly forty-seven percent of the textual notes.) The value of this volume lies less in the textual notes, however, than in the reading scenarios, which help modern readers situate their readings within the framework of select first-century social and cultural conventions. The authors use bold font to indicate that they explain certain terms or phrases—the “reading scenarios”—in the back of the book (e.g., “Lying,” “Patronage System,” and “Alternate States of Consciousness”). By creating a glossary of reading scenarios, Malina and Pilch save themselves from needless repetition: a number of these forty-five concepts recur frequently throughout. This commentary will be a helpful addition to any collection of Pauline studies.

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