



Kerux
THE JOURNAL
of
Northwest Theological Seminary

Volume 26, Number 3

December 2011



"vita vestra abscondita est cum Christo in Deo"

Colossians 3:3

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Kerux: The Journal of Northwest Theological Seminary is published three times per year (May, September, December) in digital format at Kerux.com. All copies are available free of charge and may be downloaded gratis. Editorial offices are located at 17711 Spruce Way, Lynnwood, Washington 98037-7431. Correspondence may be directed to the editor at this address or by e-mail at registrar@nwts.edu. *Kerux* is indexed in the *ATLA Religion Database* (Chicago, IL) and abstracted in *New Testament Abstracts* (Chestnut Hill, MA).

John Calvin's 1542 Exposition of Jude

Introduction

James T. Dennison, Jr.

We publish here the first English translation of a small 1542 work by John Calvin. *Exposition svr l'epitre de saint Iudas apostre de nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ* appeared as a running exposition on this catholic epistle with this byline: *composée par M. Iean Calvin*. The title page bears a drawing of a hand holding a sword, from the tip of which proceeds flaming fire. Above and below the drawing are printed Matth. X and Lvc. XII respectively. To the left of the flaming sword is a quotation from Matthew 10:34: "I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." To the right of the sword is a citation from Luke 12:49: "I have come to bring fire on the earth." A photocopy of the original was graciously provided for us by Marianne Tsioli, Librarian of the Sté du Musée historique de la Réformation et Bibliothèque Calvinienne (Universite de Genève). Our translation is based upon this primary text. In the Corpus Reformatorum, the work is entitled *Commentaire sur l'epitre de Iude* (1542), where it is located in volume 55:505-516.¹ We have compared the 1542 text with this 19th century reprint. The difference between the original and the CR reprint includes: minor variations in spelling and vocabulary (none of which affect the meaning of the text or the translation);² an additional two pages containing a paragraph of Jerome's remarks on the epistle of Jude as well as *L'argument Grec* (rendered in our translation below).

The work remains shrouded in mystery—not a mystery of exposition (Calvin is very clear on what the epistle warns and teaches), but a mystery of origin. That it was published in 1542 places it in the first year after the return of the exile. Banished from Geneva in 1538, Calvin made his way to Strasbourg where Martin Bucer prevailed upon him to become pastor of a band of French-speaking refugees. Calvin called the days of this pastorate (and his sojourn with Bucer) the happiest of his life—not the least for the wife he gained from the excursion. When he returned to Geneva with fear and trembling in 1541³, he set out to reform the church in the city. The first order of business was the *Les Ordonnances ecclésiastiques*. Approved in November,⁴ the "church order" was the foundation of Calvin's settled and permanent residence in the city as well as the inauguration (but *not* the consummation) at last of that for which he had been expelled three years prior. The exposition of Jude appeared the following year along with four other works.⁵ There is no indication of the month in which it was published and, in fact, virtually nothing is known of the circumstances which led to its publication. Jean-François Gilmont suggests "perhaps" the work (along with the *Exposition sur l'Epistre . .*

¹ The reader will note that Calvin Opera (CO) volume 55 is Corpus Reformatorum (CR) volume 83.

² We have counted 22 incidental variants.

³ Bernard Cottret says "mid-September"; Jules Bonnet (see below) dates it to Sept. 13.

⁴ Cf. Wulfert de Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin: Expanded Edition* (2008) 130.

⁵ See the list in de Greef, *ibid.*, 234.

. *aux Romains* which appeared in 1543) was a pamphlet for spiritual nurture to the “francophone” population of Geneva (hence, the French vernacular).⁶ Gilmont further speculates that the pages on Jude were sermonic material adapted for publication.⁷ Thus, we might surmise that the material on which the work is based was delivered from the pulpit of San Pierre on Calvin’s return. While this guess is as good as any, one may also wonder if, in fact, this exposition was part of the weekly *congrégations*. These Friday morning meetings proceeded with Bible exposition in the famed *lectio continua*. And, significantly, the language of these early morning conferences was French.⁸ Absent any primary document which explains Calvin’s publication of the *Exposition*, we may speculate that it may have originated in the small circle of Friday morning presentations and was printed for the sake of a broader French-speaking Geneva audience.

Nor does the internal evidence from the work itself betray a solution to our mystery. Calvin is his usual direct, textual and trenchant expository self. The turmoil reflected in the community to which Jude writes may as well be a cameo of Geneva and the other cities of the Reformation struggling against popish superstition and persecution. In between are the “clouds without water”, erstwhile fellow travelers who bedevil any emerging evangelical witness. This is certainly an auspicious reminder for a city which had cast Calvin out for attempting precisely some of the reforms to which Jude alerts his readers. On his return, a gentle reminder, penned in the native lingua franca, from the former outcast may have been deemed salient as well as timely. In any event, this suggestion has as much an air of plausibility as any other (absent a primary document to argue otherwise).

Calvin also composed a Latin commentary on the epistle of Jude which appeared in 1551.⁹ While the commentary on the epistle of James originated in the Friday *congregations*, there is no indication that the commentaries on the following catholic epistles (1 and 2 Peter, 1 John and Jude) originated in like manner.¹⁰ Reading through the commentary on Jude provides no historical or contextual reflection on events in Geneva or Calvin’s life. He is chary about personal anecdotes, socio-political turmoil, etc. and sticks to the Biblical text. This generalism may leave us without any clues to the date or venue of the commentary (perhaps it simply arose out of his personal study!) or the *exposition*, but it certainly makes the apostle’s words more broadly relevant to the church in all ages, without excluding the church in Geneva in the 1540s or 1550s. In truth, that is why Calvin is still read by the church today—he allows the Word of God to draw believers of every age into its drama.

⁶ Jean-François Gilmont, *Jean Calvin et le livre imprimé* (1997) 160.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁸ De Greef, *ibid.*, 101.

⁹ The text is found in CO 55:485-500 under the title *Commentarius in epistolam Iudae apostoli*. For the modern English translation, see *A Harmony of the Gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke and the Epistles of James and Jude* (Calvin’s Commentaries, Vol. 3) (1972) 321-336. A definitive critical edition of the Latin text of this work is now available in Kenneth Hagen, ed., *Ioannis Calvini Opera Exegetica: Volumen XX, Commentarii in epistolas canonicas* (2009) 373-389. This edition has a textual apparatus noting variants (mostly minor) among the three previous editions of 1551 (A), 1554 (B) and 1556 (C); cf. p. xxviii for details.

¹⁰ Dr Greef, 81.

We return to a catalogue of the events of 1542. Plague struck Geneva in the Fall of that year, but our “exposition” reflects no such calamity.¹¹ Does this imply that it pre-dates the Fall of 1542? Nor is there any allusion to the 1542 publication of an enlarged catechism for Geneva (now in the form of question and answer).¹² Neither does Calvin mention the 1541 French translation of his 1539 version of the *Institutes*.¹³ Albert Pighius would attack that work in the summer of 1542, but aside from generalities about heretics and disturbers of the church of Jesus Christ, no specific link between statements in the *exposition* and the pig-headed Albert may be found.¹⁴ A small band of Italian refugees were receiving preaching from their countryman, Bernard Ochino, beginning in October 1542. They were using the Chapel of the Cardinal of Ostia in San Pierre (today, the Chapelle des Macchabées). But there is no hint of the insinuation of heresy in this tiny group, as will occur a dozen years later following the execution of Michael Servetus.¹⁵ 1542 marks the inception of Calvin’s difficulties with Sebastian Castellio.¹⁶ However, again no reflection of this brouhaha appears to be reflected in the *exposition*. Calvin was, in fact, patient and kind to Castellio, but (as is the case with most agenda-driven hardheads when they do not get their way) the childish (and ?paranoid) Castellio pouted and left Geneva determined to reek vengeance on his supposed nemesis. Nor do Calvin’s letters from this period shed any light on the context of the writing and publication of the *exposition*.¹⁷

So after all is said and done, we still are no closer to solving the mystery of the historical context of this small work. But the work itself may now be read and digested by an English speaking audience for the first time. Surely, that *is* progress in Calviniana.

EXPOSITION OF THE EPISTLE OF SAINT JUDE, APOSTLE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

Written by Jean Calvin
1542

¹¹ Cf. B. Cottret, *Calvin: A Biography* (2000) 178ff.; also Calvin’s letters dated October and November 1542 in J. Bonnet, ed., *Letters of John Calvin* (1858) 1:357-63.

¹² There is no extant copy of this French original. The 1545 French reprint has been translated into English and appears in James T. Dennison, Jr., compiler, *The Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Centuries in English Translation* [hereafter RCET] (2008) 1:467-519.

¹³ Cf. de Greef, 187, who notes it appeared “not long after his return to Geneva.”

¹⁴ Calvin’s reply is *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will* (English trans., 1996). He would continue the discussion in his reply to Jerome Bolsec published in 1552 as the *Consensus Genevensis* (RCET 1:692-820).

¹⁵ Cf. the “Confession of the Italian Church of Geneva” (1558) (RCET 2:111-16) and Lattanzio Rangoni’s *Formulario* (1559) (RCET 2:161-80).

¹⁶ Cottret, 227-33; Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (2009), *passim*.

¹⁷ Cf. Bonnet, *Letters of John Calvin* (1858) 1:311-64.

Translated by Thomas and Geneviève Reid¹⁸

Argument of the Epistle of Saint Jude.

Jude writes as the necessity of the times requires, admonishing all the churches in general—those which had already received the gospel of our Lord—to keep themselves from any seducers who work to turn the hearts of simple people from the true knowledge of God and of His truth. And to the extent that it can be determined, they endeavor to engender a restriction in the justice of God and to reverse the beginnings of the gospel which had been beforehand formulated and established by the disciples of Jesus Christ. Now if such an admonition had been appropriate and suitable for that age, we know that the admonition is more than necessary today, if we consider what the state of the church is and by what attacks she is assailed.

Exposition of the Epistle of Saint Jude, Apostle.

The Only Chapter

(1) Jude, servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to the elect¹⁹, who are sanctified by God and kept by Jesus Christ, (2) mercy, peace, and²⁰ love be increased to you.

Jude terms himself a “servant of Jesus Christ” to claim through his vocation that he is doing his duty in teaching and admonishing them concerning what they have to do; in order that it will not seem that he is aggrandizing more authority and freedom to speak to the churches than belongs to him. Likewise, in this expression is contained a protest that he does not want to praise either his name or any creature, but only the Lord Jesus. Jude mentions the name of his brother, James, in order to give them more information by this identification and to better win the hearts of the faithful to listen to his doctrine. He does not try to take or seek his glory in the flesh, but writes in order that all good creatures may serve the honor of God.

At the beginning, he declares what are the fruits of the eternal election of God in those He eternally preordained to salvation. It is that they “are sanctified” in communion with the holiness of God which is bestowed on them by His Spirit. And they are preserved by Jesus, for He is our pastor and guide to whom we have been entrusted by the Father, in order that we may be preserved by His protection, so that sin, death, and the devil cannot harm us.

All the benefits which we could desire are included in this entreaty which he provides. For there is, first of all, the “mercy” of God which is His good will towards us, by which

¹⁸ Verse numbers have been supplied by the translators. Textual variants and references have been supplied by the editor. The editor has also simplified and modernized punctuation in several places.

¹⁹ esleuz (1542); eleuz (CR/CO)

²⁰ paix & dilection (1542); paix dilection (CO/CR)

we are reconciled to Him, having Him as our Father and being made participants in His Kingdom as His well-loved²¹ children. From that follows “peace”, which signifies all our prosperity, in order that, of all which we need, we lack nothing. Finally, mentioned in the third place, “love” is required to govern our lives well and with holiness toward our neighbor. Now it is necessary that all these things be multiplied, showing it is our duty to grow in our Lord all the days of our lives, until we have completed our course.

(3) Beloved²², because of the desire that I have to write to you about our common salvation, it is necessary for me to write to you, by exhorting you to strive to persevere in the faith, which has been once delivered to the saints.

Because of its difficulty, this passage can receive diverse interpretations. Nevertheless, nothing is more certain than that it appears to counteract the following wrong-headed reasoning: though the reader faces present temptations, he thinks it expedient to resist them. The sense, therefore, will be as follows, according to our understanding: “Because of the great solicitude in my heart to admonish you concerning all that is related to the salvation of you all, it is necessary for me now that I write you, that I exhort you to perseverance, which is to say, that you must apply yourselves to studying and employing all your strength to be confirmed in the faith, the one the Lord delivered to His own once for all, in order that you never deviate from it.” That is how a servant of God should stir up and encourage the faithful to constant battle, when he sees the devil appear among them to oppress them.

(4) For certain men have pushed themselves forward, who for a long time have been preordained to such a condemnation, ungodly people who have turned the grace of our God into dissolution and renounced God, our only ruler, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

This verse gives the reason why the faithful have a greater need to battle harder than ever, for they have been assailed by the temptations which follow. For these are serious and dangerous pests in the Church, people of perverse lifestyle and false doctrine; principally those contemptuous of all religion, as the apostle writes of them here. For he lays the charge against them that they transform the grace of God into dissolution; that is to say, that they have abused the grace of God and the liberty which He has given to our consciences, leading to insolence and free license to do evil. They are people without piety; in other words, they do not fear God. Finally, having renounced the rule of the one only God, they no longer recognize as a result whom we should serve and to whom, as the just judge, we will give account for our lives. And they have also rejected the yoke of Christ who has been established as Lord and Master over us. He says, in addition, that they have for a long time beforehand been predestinated to such an error, because our Lord has preordained the certain ruin of all those who do not obey His holy gospel; and, in His eternal, determined judgment, that will be the result of their perversity and malice.

²¹ bienaymez (1542); bien ayez (CR/CO)

²² bienaymez (1542); bien ayez (CR/CO)

(5) Now I want to prompt you to remember what you once knew, that the Lord, having delivered the people from Egypt, later destroyed those who did not believe.

In order to encourage them to fear the judgment of God so that they do not abandon, even slightly, the grace which has been given to them, Jude offers the example of the people of Israel. For their deliverance, what great works and miracles our Lord performed! However, he did not fail to punish their rebellion and unbelief. His retribution was even more grievous because such a benefit profited him nothing, for they were to maintain the honor of God and to glorify Him, as is His due. The punishments which the Lord imposed in the desert are summarized in the tenth chapter of First Corinthians²³.

(6) And the angels who did not keep their original position, but who left their home, he has put under guard in obscurity and with eternal chains until the judgment of the great day.

As Jude had shown earlier, if the Lord did not pardon His people of Israel, whom He had chosen from among all the nations of the earth, He will as well not pardon us if we pursue similar iniquity. Now he gives another, greater reason, for He has also not spared His own unchaste angels who had degenerated from their good nature in which they had been created. So He expelled them from His kingdom, casting them into miserable captivity, until the great day will come when they will receive their final sentence. Where we have translated the word as “position”, the Greek word is of uncertain meaning, so that others read “principality”. But the first translation is the best for our present purpose because Jude wants to admonish the people not to diverge from the straight path.

(7) As Sodom and Gomorrah and the five neighboring cities to them, having lived in similar debauchery and having been overrun by those seeking strange flesh, have been left as an example, having received the judgment of eternal fire; (8) likewise, these who are dreamers also defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of those in power.

He is saying that Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighboring cities, because of the horrible confusion which came upon these cities, are examples of an amazing judgment of God. A similar judgment will indeed come upon those of whom Jude speaks, those whose works are no less damnable than theirs, so much so that their ruin will in no way be lighter than that which we read in Genesis about those cities²⁴. By “strange flesh”, he means the confused and strange cupidities which stained these people, for they strayed beyond the limits of nature to obey their brutal sensuality. When he says that they had received “the judgment of eternal fire”, he shows that the sudden fire which fell from the sky on them was nothing other than an external manifestation of spiritual fire, which will never be extinguished. One sees in this passage a portion of the faults of these unfortunate individuals who corrupted the church of that time; for he says that they were adrift in dreams, signifying that they were in every way driven and carried about by their

²³ Cf. 1 Cor. 10:1-11, esp. vv. 5-10

²⁴ Cf. Gen. 19:24-25

carnal affection, as the spirit of the sleeper is stained and troubled by what he dreams, so much so that he has no reason to flee from his agitation. Secondly, Jude argues that they sullied themselves²⁵ by abominations which he prefers to simply note rather than explain. Finally, they defamed the powers and authorities which the Lord has ordained to govern human affairs, wishing to introduce confusion, so that one can no longer discern good from evil.

(9) Now the archangel Michael, when he contended with the devil, disputing over the body of Moses, did not dare bring a judgment of malediction against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" (10) But these people speak evil of the things they do not know and they naturally, like brute beasts, approve them.

It is very true that this story has not been extracted from any book of Scripture, from any version which we still have in use today. Perhaps this story was so often told among the Jewish people from mouth to mouth that it had become a commonplace. It is true that there is inscripturated in Deuteronomy chapter 34²⁶, the fact that Moses was buried by the Lord in a valley in the land of Moab, and his sepulcher was known to no human being. One can judge that what was done (as the matter itself clearly shows) was from fear that the Jews honored Moses so much that they would treat his body as an idol. Based on that belief comes, therefore, the combat of the Angel of the Lord with the devil, the latter trying²⁷ to insinuate that Moses' body could indeed be found, and therefore, Israel could worship it against God's will. Now Jude says that, in this combat, Michael never wanted to pronounce a judgment of malediction against the devil; that is to say, to pronounce a word of execration against him which would recognize him to be a creature of God. In this manner, Michael simply imposed silence on the devil in the name of the Lord. In contrast, Jude says that in those of such temerity that they do not pardon another creature, how clear it is that they know nothing to say in response. And they have no pleasure in anything else, unless it is in those who, from their natural understanding, without reason and intelligence, comprehend neither more nor less than the brute beasts; who are all mixed up by their carnal affections, more especially, that they have no other sentiment than these. In what Jude says (that they²⁸ have corrupted themselves), it is necessary to note that in all that man comprehends in his carnality, there is nothing but corruption.

(11) Woe to them²⁹! They have run in the way of Cain, they have abandoned themselves to the error of the house of Balaam, and they perished in the rebellion of Korah.

In order that no one be so foolish as to join with such people, Jude declares what will be the end of them: that is to say, condemnation, which he proves by citing the example of those who have been their imitators. For as Cain (thus it is written in the second [sic!]

²⁵ euxmesmes (1542); eux mesmes (CR/CO)

²⁶ Cf. Deut. 34:5-6

²⁷ enauant (1542); en avant (CO/CR)

²⁸ que ilz (1542); qu'ilz (CO/CR)

²⁹ iceulx (1542); iceux (CO/CR)

chapter of Genesis³⁰), being envious of his brother's acceptance by God, murdered him, so these unfortunates, displeased that the faithful serve as holy and innocent in life before their God, perversely try to murder their souls.

Likewise, as Balaam was content for money to reverse the benedictions of God and to destroy the people of God (as we read in the twelfth [sic!] chapter of Numbers³¹), similarly, for their hunger and lust, they desire in their malice to scatter the church of God and to cause it to fall and be ruined in malediction; so much so that to do it, they are brimming over without limit, as if with a loose bridle no longer keeping them in check.

Likewise, Korah, with Dathan and Abiram (as appears in the sixteenth chapter of Numbers³²) created a revolt against Moses in order to deprive him of his ministry and office, to which he had been consecrated by God; in doing so, they rebelled against God. Similarly, those who resist and create rebellion against all the servants of God and ministers of the gospel are really against Jesus Christ, who is the leader and head of all. Now if none of those were left unpunished, not failing to undergo horrible vengeance from God, as the Scriptures testify, one should not think that those who do the same will escape from the hand of this great Judge.

(12) They are stains on your banquets, eating hungrily, satisfying³³ themselves³⁴; clouds without rain, carried here and there by the winds; unfruitful trees of autumn, twice dead and uprooted; (13) rough waves of the sea, foaming their own shame; wandering stars, for whom is reserved the darkness of eternal gloom.

Now by several similitudes, Jude demonstrates how much poverty and wretchedness there is among them. Firstly, he remonstrates that their "banquets", where they assembled themselves, were stained and contaminated by people so depraved that his readers had to understand that they must reject their company. And he gives the reason: they will try to hide their gluttony while eating in a dissolute manner and without any modesty. At this point, it is noteworthy that the Christians, outside the Holy Supper, enjoyed certain banquets where they assembled for charitable purposes. Mainly, these meals were for the indigent who could be brought in and cared for. Otherwise, it would have been a damnable life for such rogues to have no other care than for their own³⁵ meals, not thinking of the poor for whom one should have the greater concern.

In addition, Jude compares them to "clouds without rain", which aimlessly disturb the air, keeping people forever in suspense as they wait for rain; in this expression, he

³⁰ Actually Gen. 4:1-8

³¹ Actually Num. 22ff.

³² Cf. Num. 16:1-33

³³ paissant (1542); paissans (CO/CR)

³⁴ euxmesmes (1542); eux mesmes (CO/CR)

³⁵ euxmesmes (1542); eux mesmes (CO/CR)

demonstrates their futility. And he even goes further³⁶ with the picture of the winds “here and there” underlining their changeableness and fickleness.

Secondly, Jude compares them to the “trees of autumn”, after the gathering of the fruit, when they have nothing but leaves and these ready to fall off very quickly³⁷. Nevertheless, he provides next a dissimilitude, which is that the trees in the spring recommence to turn green and bear fruit. However, there is no more hope of fruit in these than in those stripped of everything and also doubly dried out by various frosts and other³⁸ problems and completely “uprooted”.

Thirdly, these people are like “waves of the sea”, pushed impetuously by the wind. For as the winds make the water wild³⁹ and troubled and foaming, in the same way these people, in all their impetuosity by which they wish to break others, ruin themselves⁴⁰; for they all collapse into confusion.

Finally, these people are like “wandering stars”. For they are not settled in a certain position as the other stars are, but have their own spheres which they circle. Also, they do not settle anywhere, but are swayed by diverse opinions. The conclusion is that in the end, a grievous eternal condemnation awaits them.

(14) Also Enoch, the seventh man after Adam, prophesied about them saying: “Behold, the Lord has come, with thousands of His saints, (15) to enter judgment against all of them, to convince the unbelieving among them of their evil actions, which they have sinfully committed and of all the wrong words which they have spoken against Him.”

Although this sentence has not been preserved until today, nonetheless we should take this sentence as good and holy, without tormenting ourselves a lot about the matter. For it is possible that there was never a specific book written by Enoch, but that, seeing the malice of men who had risen to the top, Enoch was forced to proclaim to them the following vengeance—a denunciation which had been known among the people of Israel as worthy of remembrance. Now the apostle says that this denunciation can be applied accurately to those who, more than the others, provoke the ire of God by their sins, as much by their actions as by their words. This judgment of God, which is spoken of here, will be commenced in this world in the form of all the punishments which God brings upon the sinful; however, it will not be perfectly accomplished until the manifestation of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ at the last day. For then, He will come in power with His angels in order to give to each one what his works deserve. Thousands of angels are

³⁶ encor (1542); encore (CO/CR)

³⁷ bien tost (1542); bientost (CO/CR)

³⁸ autres (1542); autre (CO/CR)

³⁹ par leur escume (1542); par leur exume (CO/CR)

⁴⁰ euxmesmes (1542); eux mesmes (CO/CR)

mentioned here, as in Daniel chapter 7⁴¹ and the 68th Psalm⁴². Where we have translated “unbelieving”, the Greek word signifies those who in their hearts have no reverence for the majesty of God.

(16) These are grumblers, disputers, walking according to their lusts, whose mouth speaks haughty things, admiring appearances because of the possibility of gain.

Again, Jude marks them out more obviously and discourses further concerning their vices in order that nobody should be kept in ignorance. He calls them “grumblers”, from which it follows that the Christian must avoid grumbling and evil reports which can produce discord and incite debates or ill will among men. Next, he says that they are “disputers”, which proceeds from arrogance and impatience of spirit: when one can endure nothing from his neighbor, the complaints and quarrels have no end. The third description is that they walk “according to their lusts”; that is to say, that they are given over to an affection for their flesh, which the Christian must renounce in order to accommodate himself to the will of God and that of his neighbor. Then, he notes their haughtiness in the words that these people cannot hide the pride in their hearts, always glorifying themselves and boasting, putting others down. Finally, flattery—for they applaud those with status among men in order to take from their substance, despising the poor and humble from whom they have no hope of gain.

(17) But you, beloved⁴³, be remembering the words which have been preached to you by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, (18) that they have told you that, in the last times, there will be mockers walking according to their ungodly lusts.

So that they will not be troubled seeing such pests bearing the name of Jesus Christ and so that they not lose courage as a result, Jude brings to their minds how the apostles of our Lord had warned the faithful about them. This warning they can take as the substance of their consolation and strengthening, so that they do not fail to persevere in their calling. He specifies (as is the practice in the Scriptures) that “the last times” commenced when we began to await the resurrection and the final coming of the Lord, which is the whole period of the New Testament. Because all things have been⁴⁴ accomplished, we do not await new prophecies nor revelation until the time when the Lord will show Himself to His own people face-to-face. He calls “mockers” those who condemn the judgments of God, so that they make them into a game and a farce, as do those who ask, “Where is the day of the Lord?⁴⁵” That about which the apostles admonished these people can be seen in part in the epistles to Timothy⁴⁶ and Second Peter⁴⁷ and other passages. Here, Jude speaks much more of the spoken admonitions, but there is no doubt that they are similar to those which they had received in writing.

⁴¹ Cf. Dan. 7:10

⁴² Cf. Ps. 68:17

⁴³ bien-aimez (1542); bienaymez (CO/CR)

⁴⁴ este (1542); été (CO/CR)

⁴⁵ Cf. 2 Pet. 3:4

⁴⁶ Cf. 1 Tim. 4:1ff.; 2 Tim. 3:1ff.

⁴⁷ Cf. 2 Pet. 3:3ff.

(19) These are creating divisions, sensual and without the Spirit.

Jude gives them more pressing injunctions in order that they keep themselves from these corruptors. He says that they also work to create separations which is a characteristic of false prophets. For their main goal is to break the union that Jesus Christ has desired among His members. So he calls them “sensual and without the Spirit”, which is consistent with what he has said above; for he means that there is nothing in them of spiritual regeneration, by which we enter into the Kingdom of God, having nothing of the depraved and corrupted human nature.

(20) But you, beloved⁴⁸, you are building up yourselves in your very holy faith, offering prayers by the Holy Spirit, (21) keeping yourselves in the love of God, awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ in eternal life.

After having warned them enough of the evils from which they must keep themselves, Jude shows them the remedies that they should use in order to be able to guarantee it. First, he teaches them to grow always more and more in the faith where they had their foundation (which he calls “very holy”) making them understand that all those who hold fast to it will have a very certain support and assurance of salvation. But because that is not a virtuous human work, he commands them afterward to look to God, by whom, when we are strengthened in His virtue, we work virtuously. Now he wants their prayers to be offered through the Holy Spirit, for our understanding cannot attain to asking what is according to God, if the Spirit of God Himself does not help our infirmity (about which more is amply written in Romans the eighth chapter⁴⁹). Finally, he shows them what the end of these things is—that in hope and patience, they await the mercy of the Lord; for the natural man only looks at present things, believing that there is no other life nor felicity than what can be seen with the eye. Nevertheless, he surrounds himself with the delicacies of this world as the pig wallows in the mud. Therefore, the faithful need to exert themselves to await the last day, when all things will be reduced to their proper estate. It is good to note that Jude does not propose any foundation nor⁵⁰ expectation for eternal life other than through the mercy of the Lord, in order that all the imagined worthiness of our works may be beaten down and all glory given to His mercy.

(22) And receive some with pity, judging them, (23) the others save with fear, rescuing them from the fire, detesting even the garment contaminated by the flesh.

Jude further instructs them that it is not enough to avoid the way of death and perdition themselves, in order to serve God with purity and holiness⁵¹, if they do not also work to win others (those whom they perceive to be estranged) and to enlighten them as to our Lord. However, he exhorts them to so flee and avoid this perverse nation; that they should be at pains to drive them to a better life and this in diverse ways according to what

⁴⁸ bien-aimez (1542); bienaymez (CO/CR)

⁴⁹ Cf. Rom. 8:26-39

⁵⁰ ny (1542); n'y (CO/CR)

⁵¹ saintement (1542); saintement (CO/CR)

they will see to be expedient. Since some want to be led by gentleness and kindness and others by greater severity and rigor, it is necessary that we be prudent in order to accommodate such a diversity of spirits. He says, then, that towards those whom we will perceive to be the most docile, we will greatly moderate our sharp condemnation so that we will treat them with mercy. But for those who have been hardened, we will use the fear of the judgment of God. For we must act towards them as if we were pulling them from a fire that was burning them, which cannot be done without violent effort. However, he wants us to be displeased with the vices which surround them, which he calls a “garment” according to the common usage of the Scripture—equating the “wrapping” in garments with the “enwrapping” by sin.

(24) Now, to the one who can keep them without stumbling and make them blameless before His glory with rejoicing, (25) who is the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for all ages. Amen.

As he began his epistle with several prayers, recognizing God to be the one from whom every good thing must be asked, now Jude also magnifies God’s grandeur as the one who is uniquely worthy to be magnified. He again interjects⁵² the principle by which we can best be advocates for salvation, which is to recommend them to God, who alone has the power to regenerate unto faith in order to correct them. The goal is to bring them to appear before His majesty and judicial throne without blemish but with joy and rejoicing, which will then be poured out on all His servants, as it is written. Now Jude desires that all “glory and majesty” be attributed to God; not that He does not already have them without us and even against the will of His enemies, but because we must all desire that everyone recognize Him as He is, to render to Him the praise that He rightly deserves.

End of the exposition of Saint Jude.

So that these pages remain useful, it seemed to us strongly advisable to add what saint Jerome said about saint Jude in the book which he entitled, *The Catalogue of the Ecclesiastical Doctors, with the Greek Argument*. So saint Jerome speaks as follows.

Jude, brother of James, has left us a very brief epistle, which is numbered among the seven Catholic Epistles. Now concerning the testimony of the Book of Enoch here, which is apocryphal, none having accepted it—nevertheless, it has become authoritative in the Church from the earliest times and has always been in use. As such, it is considered to be a part of Holy Scripture.⁵³

The Greek Argument.

Jude writes this epistle to those who said they had believed. Now the argument is as follows. Since none by subtlety had gained an advantage, and faith was considered to be

⁵² Entremeslant (1542); Entremeslans (CO/CR)

⁵³ This statement is based on Jerome’s *De viris illustribus, On Illustrious Men* (Fathers of the Church, vol. 100) (1999) 11. Cf. Migne, PL 23:613, 615.

of no efficacy by some who in this way had renounced the Lord, necessity had forced Jude to write in order to reassure the brothers. First then, he exhorts them to battle for and persevere in the faith that was given to them. Then, after he condemns the way of life of certain people (such as liars) forbidding the faithful to have any communication with them, he remonstrates with them that it is not sufficient that we have been called, if we do not walk in a worthy manner, as our vocation requires. He gives examples, firstly, of the people of Israel, whom God destroyed after having delivered them from Egypt—as many as had not persisted in the faith. Secondly, he gives the parallel example of the angels whom He had not pardoned because they did not remain in the state in which they had been placed. Thereby, he concludes that it is necessary to separate from such people, teaching that such ruin as that which fell upon Sodom will come upon them. Then he exhorts the faithful to good morals. In conclusion, Jude prays that God would be willing to give them firmness of faith and closes his epistle⁵⁴.

The End

⁵⁴ The editor has not been able to locate the original source of this “Greek Argument”.

Chiastic Homoiototon in Hebrews 10:39 and 11:1

James T. Dennison, Jr.

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews has been universally designated a master of the Greek language—including rhetorical and literary devices sprinkled throughout his scintillating letter. In particular, one of his¹ favorite literary devices is transitional parallelism, more popularly labeled ‘hook words’. The French expression for this device is *les mots crochets* (“the crocheted words”). The author concatenates sections of his letter by ‘crocheting’ units or pericopes together so that the transitions to the subsequent unfolding of his argument are linked or ‘hooked’ together². This fascinating paradigm is not only a testimony to his skill, it weaves successive units of his letter into a seamless garment.

The unifying motif of his epistolary narrative is the pilgrimage of the people of God from the city of man (world of earth) to the city of God (world of heaven). Christ himself is the Pioneer and Perfecter (12:2) of that sojourn which our author addresses to the “Hebrews” of the end of the age.³ We note that our author places the pilgrim paradigm at the narrative heart of his letter: the OT protological Hebrews or sojourners in relation to the NT Eschatological Sojourner. And all true Christians⁴ are semi-eschatological sojourners and pilgrims (“Hebrews”) in Christ.

At the transition between chapter 10 and chapter 11, our author moves from a consideration of the priestly or sacrificial⁵ work of Christ (4:14-10:19⁶) to the “blessed possessors”⁷ of the former OT era—the so-called “cloud of witnesses” who compose the vanguard of the “Hebrews”. These join the general-assembly church at the end of pilgrim days in the heavenly Jerusalem (where Christ, *the Pilgrim*, sits at the Father’s right hand—1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2, 22). As that priesthood of Christ is heaven-oriented (an

¹ As indicated by the masculine gender reflexive participle in 11:32 (“time would fail me [masculine] recounting”).

² Notice this pattern in the Greek text at: 4:16/5:1 (“receive/appointed” [NASB; but the Greek roots are identical]); 6:20/7:1 (“Melchizedek”); 7:28/8:1 (“high priests/high priest”); 8:13/9:1 (“first”); 9:28/10:1 (“offered/offer”); 10:39/11:1 (“faith”); 11:39/12:1 (“witnessed” [NASB reads “gained approval,” but compare the Greek roots]/“witnesses”). The significance of these transitions are diagrammed and discussed in the author’s audio lectures on the entire epistle to the Hebrews, available at nwts.edu and via Podcast, etc. Lectures and downloads are available without charge.

³ Cf. James T. Dennison, Jr., “To the Hebrews’: A Narrative Paradigm.” *Kerux: The Journal of Northwest Theological Seminary* 26/2 (September 2011): 30-33. This paradigm forms the cohesive focus of the author’s audio lectures on the whole letter as noted in note 2 above.

⁴ Those with a “sincere” (Greek, ἀληθινῆς, “true”) heart of faith (10:22) are banded together with genuine believers (“by faith”) of the OT era (cf. esp. Heb. 11).

⁵ The use of tabernacle imagery in this section underscores the narrative sojourn motif of the entire letter—a sojourning tabernacle is suited to a sojourning people. The Lord God accommodates himself culturally to the itinerative story of his people.

⁶ Several commentators have noticed the framing device which brackets 4:14 through 10:19/21.

⁷ A phrase commonly used by Cornelius Van Til.

eschatological priesthood), so the pilgrims of old (as well as the strangers and aliens of the present) were/are heaven-oriented (an eschatological sojourn, 11:10, 16). The argument will climax with this celestial-homeland motif in 12:22 and 13:14, but it is the undergirding narrative and literary thesis of this epistle—“to the pilgrim ‘Hebrews’ of these ‘last days’ (1:2)”.

In order to weave together the transition from heavenly priesthood to heavenly possession (with illustrations from the OT era), the author uses homoiototon (ὁμοιόπτωτον) in 10:39 and 11:1.⁸ Homoiototon is a literary or rhetorical technique in which similar case endings are repeated in series. The easiest example is the Latin declaration of Julius Caesar: “Veni, vidi, vici.” This example also has the virtue of being alliterative, hence doubly rhetorical (initial and terminal alliterative homoiototon). In the Greek text below, the reader will note the similar case endings patterned ζ to ν in 10:39 and ν to ζ in 11:1. The reverse parallelism of the endings is also rhetorically (if not theologically) significant.

(10:39) ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐκ ἐσμὲν ὑποστολῆς εἰς ἀπώλειαν ἀλλὰ πίστεως εἰς περιποίησιν ψυχῆς.

(11:1) Ἐστὶν δὲ πίστις ἐλπίζομένων ὑπόστασις, πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων.

The sequence may be graphed as follows.

For 10:39:

ζ
 ν
 ζ
 ζ
 ν
 ζ
 ν
 ζ

For 11:1:

ν
 ζ
 ν
 ζ
 ν
 ζ
 ν
 ζ

⁸ Michael R. Cosby demonstrated the use of this device in Heb. 11:33-34, 37 in his monograph *The Rhetorical Composition and Function of Hebrews 11* (1988) 82. However, he does not appear to have detected it in the transitional parallelism between chapter 10 and chapter 11.

Not only is there homoiototon here in both verses, the sequence is chiasmic. Each verse begins and ends with a word that has the same case ending (as it were, an inclusio around the verse). But the hinge of the chiasm in each case is the alternate homoiototon case ending (as it were, featuring the turning point of the chiasm). This is indeed a remarkable literary and rhetorical achievement. And yet, we have not exhausted the genius of our author in merely observing the chiasmic symmetry of endings.

Observe the post-positive particle δε, positionally and symmetrically placed. In addition, both verses contain the negative particle (οὐκ/οὐ). Note that it occurs near the beginning of verse 39, while it occurs near the end of 11:1—again, a symmetrical pattern enclosing the beginning and end of this transitional concatenation. Furthermore, the initial negative (v. 39) is followed by a positive assertion; the concluding negative (v. 1) is preceded by a positive assertion. The balance places the antithesis over against the thesis (“not” shrinking back to destruction, but the soul’s possessing the substance of things hoped for by faith, which possession places one in contact with the “not”-visible, eternal world of heaven—certainly antithetical to the arena of “destruction”). In addition, the “p” sound (π) is found five times in each verse—more symmetry. The υποστ- stem is duplicated in each verse, as is the πστ- stem. There is also a duplication of the εσ- stem. In all, our author has crafted a magnificent assertion exegetical of the symmetry in the soul’s possession⁹ and the soul’s expectation. The transition links possession to the eschatological realities (substantial hope and invisible things). The believer’s soul partakes of the opposite of destruction because faith brings the future and invisible reality hoped for (namely, the world of heaven) into it. By faith, the heavenly benefits of the finished sacrificial work of Christ become a “blessed possession” of the soul transformed by that divine and supernatural gift.

The present possession of future eschatological realities through faith is the principal point of the roll call of the “Hebrews” from the former era. Our author explicitly (and exegetically) describes his *modus operandi* in 11:13-16. Notice the antithesis which frames this aside. In fact, this unit is the author’s commentary on the entire narrative of his epistle: believers in all ages (Old and New Testament alike) are sojourners and strangers “in the earth” (ἐπι τῆς γῆς), while at the same time possessing (by faith) a “heavenly” (ἐπουρανίου, “in the heavens”) homeland (πατρίδα). The antipodes of the ἐπ-contrast is itself existential—all believers in the Lord God and his con-substantial (ὑποστάσεως, 1:3) Son, Jesus Christ, are journeying between earth and heaven. In fact, they possess the one and the other: the former in retrospect, the latter in prospect. This “now”/“not yet” paradigm is indicative of NT eschatology throughout the corpus of the revelatory canon of “these last days”. But our author projects it back to the OT era as indicative of the eschatology of every era in the history of redemption. This is not to blur the distinction between the former and the latter age; rather, it is to seamlessly gather up the transforming or regenerating grace of God in both ages under the theme of saving

⁹ We follow the NASB margin here for περιποίησιν. At every place in the NT where this noun appears, it retains the sense of “possessing” or “possession” (cf. the Latin *acquisitio*): God’s elect as his “possession” by redemption (Eph. 1:14); the eschatological destiny is not wrath, but the “possession” of salvation through Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 5:9); the effectual call of the gospel is unto the “possession” of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 2:14); people of God’s own “possession” (1 Pet. 2:9).

faith or eschatological faith. That is to say, true, sincere, saving faith in every era is eschatological in character—it places the believing pilgrim (“Hebrew”) in possession of the substantial glories of heaven through the perceptive evidence that the invisible Triune God is the central reality of all human existence. Faith, eschatologically construed, brings Abel and Enoch and Abraham and Moses and David and NT Christians into possession of the heavenly city where God himself dwells (11:10, 16; 12:22; 13:14); and it does so semi-eschatologically—“now” and “not yet”.¹⁰

Thus, the function of our author’s brilliant chiasmic homoiopiton in 10:39 and 11:1 is to hook together the narrative thread of his letter, unfolding the drama of the heavenly priesthood of Christ (“now” anchored in his crucifixion; “not yet” manifest in his heavenly-tabernacle intercession) and the drama of the heavenly pilgrims of these eschatological days (ἐσχάτου των ἡμερων, 1:2). The perfect symmetry in his construction of this narrative, literary and rhetorical transition is the mirror reflection of the great high priest himself in the pilgrims of every age who, by faith, have possessed him in all his rich glory and all-sufficiency (NB: the eschatological thrust of the author’s repeated use of ἀπαξ [9:26, 28; 12:26, 27] and ἐφάπαξ [7:27; 9:12; 10:10]). What would possess the soul of earthly pilgrims more substantially than the once-for-all sacrifice, death, resurrection and intercession of the Son of God. And what would possess the soul of earthly pilgrims more evidentially than the once-for-all arrival at journey’s end—where Jesus sits, at the right hand of his Father’s glory, in a city populated by Noah and Sarah and Jacob and Joseph and Rahab and Samson and the “blessed possessors” of every age from the foundation of the world.

You pilgrims of this age have been folded into the Eschatological Pilgrim (Jesus Christ) and your story has been woven into his story—the story of an eschatological high priest—an eschatological tabernacle—an eschatological city—an eschatological pilgrimage. An old, old story which you possess, by faith, both now and forevermore. The author of Hebrews has chiasmically mirrored you in *the Priest* and *the Pilgrim*. Your transition from this world to the next is reflected in the general assembly of the pilgrims of every age, together with whom you are perfected, even as your heavenly Pilgrim Priest has perfected sacrifice, sojourn and session. “To him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen!”

¹⁰ It does so also by bringing all believing OT and NT pilgrims into possession of the finished atoning work of Christ—by anticipation (OT types and shadows) or by realization (NT antitypes and reality).

Reviews

K:JNWTS 26/3 (2011):20-23

Kyle Keefer, *The New Testament as Literature: A Very Short Introduction*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008. 136pp. Paper. ISBN: 978-0-1953-0020-8. \$11.95.

Looking for a book to introduce newcomers to the New Testament as literature, Dr. Keefer's title might catch our eye. Having taken a couple classes alongside Kyle Keefer in his student days at Emory, I remember his interesting comments on literature during class discussions. And thus I was interested to see what he would do in this short introduction. The book displays some of Dr. Keefer's literary interests, particularly those in Shakespeare and in Chaucer. He also seeks to relate some of these insights to his interpretation of the New Testament, at least in outline. For instance, he comments on how the parable of the Good Samaritan presses the reader to consider the possibility of interpreting the Good Samaritan as the neighbor as well as the man on the road. And he introduces newcomers to some of the literary contents of Mark, such as the difference between insiders and outsiders, the dullness of the disciples, and the three predictions of Jesus' death. However, Dr. Keefer's discussion seems to turn more into a short recitation of the narratives than literary analysis as we move along, especially as we get to Matthew and Luke. He does comment on the connection between Luke and Acts, but does not develop this connection in ways that would at least reflect some of the literary insights of his teacher, Luke Timothy Johnson. That is, he does not comment on prophecies made in Luke that are fulfilled in Acts or on the prophetic resemblance of the apostles in Acts to that of Jesus in the gospel. Nor does he summarize the literary insights of Robert Tannehill on Luke. As for Acts, he does reflect on the main character of the book, indicating that it is the Holy Spirit. Luke does not complete the lives of any of the other characters, since they are significant only insofar as they are guided by the Holy Spirit. Thus, Dr. Keefer concludes that Christ continues to be prominent in the narrative of Acts.

Dr. Keefer's comments on the dialogues in John and the misunderstanding of hearers returns us to something closer to a narrative analysis, but he does not connect them to the rich displacement/replacement themes of the gospel. Unfortunately, these insights into the main narratives of the New Testament are a bit thin, as we see it, for a promising introduction (albeit "short") of the New Testament as literature.

The book would seem appropriate only for the most basic of beginners. However, for this purpose we cannot recommend it for other reasons as well. Dr. Keefer shows his higher critical cards at various points. On the authorship of the gospels, he asserts that none of the gospel writers were those whose names were attached to the documents. None of the gospel writers were companions of Jesus. This is not the stuff to give a beginner even if the book otherwise contained more literary insights into the New Testament.

Further, he denies the heavenly character of union with Christ in John's gospel and replaces it with a form of mystical union that is non-eschatological. Here Dr. Keefer is following a higher critical argument that John's gospel is a movement away from the

apocalypticism of other New Testament authors. Thus, he gives us a form of Christ mysticism that follows liberal Christianity rather than John. While asserting the apocalyptic character of the book of Revelation, Dr. Keefer also shows his higher critical hand here as well, asserting that its language of eternal judgment is essentially mythological. He thereby undermines the need for Christ's substitutionary work by which he bore the eternal wrath of God. The gospel for which our budding beginners have come to faith is thus torn asunder and some are thrown into confusion.

Again, in his discussion of Paul, he notes the literary character of the letters, but his insights into those letters fall short. First, our beginner is told that Paul did not write the Pastoral Epistles, though Dr. Keefer does include 2 Thessalonians, Ephesians and Colossians in his discussion of Paul. While Dr. Keefer does outline some elements of Greco-Roman rhetoric (such as *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*), he tries to discuss *ethos* and *pathos* separated from *logos*. We do not object to his focusing attention on each of these one at a time for the sake of discussion; and here he has some insights. However, even where he focuses attention on Paul's *ethos* and *pathos*, we think that Dr. Keefer stretches his point too far when he contrasts how Paul separates himself from the Galatians to the way in which Paul unites himself to other churches. For in 4:12-5, Paul reminds the Galatians of their former bond to him, introducing this recollection with the words: "become as I am, for I also have become as you are". And the narration of his former life in Judaism, conversion, and preaching among the Gentiles (1:13-24) partially functions as his introductory attempt to encourage the Galatians (now attached to Judaism) to unite themselves to his story in Christ. In this way, they will return to the gospel. With this qualification, Dr. Keefer has some basic insights into Paul's rhetorical strategy in his letters.

But when Dr. Keefer uses rhetoric to state that Paul is not a dogmatic teacher like Augustine, we cannot agree. If he simply had in mind that Paul is a redemptive-historical theologian rather than a topical doctrinal preacher, we would concur. But instead Dr. Keefer seems to suggest that the purpose of these letters is not to reveal a coherent theology (which he believes focuses too much on *logos*). Here once again he reveals his higher critical hand. We believe that we find in Paul's letters the revelation of the apostolic biography and union with Christ for the sake of the church. But this revelation is a revelation of God's heavenly glory in Christ unto the eschatological glorification of his name. As such it must also be coherent or it is weak and inglorious. Thus, this message is eminently theocentric (theological) and Christocentric (Christological), and the development of Christian doctrine in the church is a natural outgrowth of the teaching and assumptions of the New Testament authors. As Greco-Roman rhetoricians argued for *logos* (reason) by establishing their credibility (*ethos*) and making passionate appeals (*pathos*), so does Paul in his letters.

Where Dr. Keefer does discuss theology, he denies Luther's teaching of *simul justus et peccator*—that Christians are simultaneously just and sinners while still in this world. Luther had supported this doctrine with Augustine's interpretation of Romans 7, claiming that it referred to Christians. Like Jacob Arminius, Ernst Kasemann and a stream of higher critics, Dr. Keefer claims that the text refers to unbelievers and thinks he has

thereby undermined Luther's doctrine. However, this is not the only text on which Luther based his teaching. Romans 4:5, in which God "justifies the ungodly" so that "his faith is reckoned as righteousness", was another primary text. As for Romans 7, no unbeliever completely in bondage to sin could say (like the Psalmists) "I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man" (Rom. 7:22). While we believe Paul is here focusing on Old Testament saints who are "sold under bondage to sin" relatively speaking (Gal. 4:1-3), continuity exists between them and New Testament Christians who are also *simul justus et peccator*. And it is on this basis that Paul can seek to have his readers identify with these OT saints through his use of "I" (perhaps the rhetorical use of speech-in-context). Paul does this for the purpose of leading them on to the fuller identification with Christ that takes place in the redemptive-historical transition of Rom. 8:1ff.

Dr. Keefer also claims that Paul does not teach eternal wrath. This is odd (but not surprising for a higher critic) since he allows 2 Thessalonians in his discussion. And this letter states that "these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction" (1:9). This is not temporary destruction (annihilationist), but a destruction that has the nature of being eternal, everlasting. Again in Romans 2:7-8, Paul contrasts "wrath" (v. 8) with "eternal life" (v. 7), suggesting that the wrath is also eternal.

Dr. Keefer does not deal with the general epistles, but does discuss Hebrews. However, here he wrongly suggests that unlike Paul the author of Hebrews discounts the importance of the historical Jesus since he wants to go beyond the fundamental teachings which include the resurrection of the dead (6:1-2). But again, this conclusion does not do justice to all the facts. The letter speaks of Jesus during his earthly life and sees his resurrection glory as a result of the prayers he made during it (5:7-10). And it continually focuses on Christ as the *resurrected* high priest (7:11-8:6).

As for the book of Revelation, he notes the unique literary character of apocalyptic literature, which would be a good antidote against Dispensationalism. But from this, he draws the unwarranted conclusion that the book is mythological (as we noted). Thus, he compares it to fantasy literature. No real surprise here since at one point he alludes to Bultmann's kernel/husk distinction.

Dr. Keefer's final section deals with unity and diversity in the New Testament. Admittedly, he distances himself from Elaine Pagels and others of her ilk by confessing that the development of the canon was not simply a top down approach from the bishops of the church. And he does not see as many contradictions in the New Testament as some other higher critics. In support of harmony, he speaks of the various portraits of Jesus in the gospels as different literary perspectives. But once again, he tips his higher critical hat by saying that the New Testament does contain contradictions, even if these contradictions are like the contradictory speeches in Hamlet which add to the drama. However, this is contradiction nonetheless. And to make such a comparison to Hamlet is to wrongly imply that the New Testament authors in their relationships to one another are either vacillating or deceptive characters like the prince of Denmark. In addition for Dr. Keefer, these portraits of Jesus are merely literary portraits and do not reveal the historical Jesus. While Dr. Keefer may see himself as criticizing the Jesus seminar (i.e.,

their continuing quest for the historical Jesus), he is also taking a swipe at traditional Christianity by denying the historical veracity of the gospels. Again, this is not good stuff to give our budding beginner.

Thus, in spite of the promise of the title, we cannot recommend this book. For those equipped to handle its higher critical views, there are few if any insights that are worth their time and cannot be learned from other sources. And for the rest, it is unfit. It is gutted of real concrete supernatural eschatology. Thus, Dr. Keefer takes the heart out of New Testament literature—that heart being the redemptive historical/eschatological drama in Christ which provides the basis of the rich literary unity and multiformity that we have in the New Testament writings.

—Scott F. Sanborn

K:JNWTS 26/3 (2011):23-24

Joel B. Green, *Practicing Theological Interpretation: Engaging Biblical Texts for Faith and Formation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2011. 160pp. Paper. ISBN: 978-0-8010-3963-8. \$21.99.

Professor Joel Green holds a Ph.D. from Aberdeen University, has taught for ten years at Asbury Theological Seminary and is now the Associate Dean of the Center for Advanced Theological Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA. Of the four chapters in this book, the first three originated as the Earle Lectures on Biblical Literature, presented at Nazarene Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO. The fourth chapter was added to show how the principle he is expounding was applied by John Wesley.

In this book, Dr. Green is defending the use of theological interpretation of the Bible versus historical-critical interpretation. In his opinion, historical-critical study renders the Bible useless because it has only an historical perspective and says nothing with respect to our lives today. Therefore, we must take the Bible as transmitted in its present form and understand it in terms of the ecumenical creeds and their message for the church in all ages. He states it this way: “I claim that theological interpretation has no room for Historical Criticism, that theological interpretation is interested in Historical Criticism only insofar as it might serve rhetorical interests, and that theological interpretation is very much hospitable toward and dependent on Historical Criticism” (45).

In this last statement, Dr. Green shows the foundation of his whole problem. The minute that you accept higher criticism and its conclusions, you cannot claim that the Bible is the final and authoritative word of God. You are forced to make a choice between the historicity of Scripture and the validity of its message. You cannot accept what the Bible says about itself: i.e., that it is “God breathed” (2 Tim. 3:16); that “men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21).

To properly deal with the Bible as the Word of God, you must study it in its historic context and understand it as God has delivered it. You must always ask yourself, “What does it say?” The more you know about its background, who wrote it, to whom it was addressed, what its message is, how one portion of Scripture compares with another part of Scripture, etc., the better you can apply its teaching to our lives today. You don’t drive a wedge between history and theology. You take yourself back into the Bible to understand the theology. In this way, you learn how God communicates his truth to us today.

Furthermore, Dr. Green is put in an untenable position regarding where his final authority for faith lies. He says, “It will not do, I have suggested, simply to make Scripture the foundation on which to build the creed, or to make the creed in some sense the foundation for rendering the meaning of Scripture. My sense is that the best way to characterize their relationship is in terms of dialectic or, perhaps better, mutual influence” (95).

If there is mutual influence, then which creeds do you choose to follow? We have a good idea where Dr. Green stands since he is of the Wesleyan tradition and in chapter four he uses John Wesley’s diatribe against predestination to illustrate how his “Theological Interpretation” is to be put into practice. No, we are in a bind if we make the church or its creeds of equal authority with the Scriptures. God speaks in his Word and only in his Word as the final authority. Don’t waste your time reading this book.

—J. Peter Vosteen