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"vita vestra abscondita est cum Christo in Deo"
Colossians 3:3

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The Structure of the Epistle of Jude

James T. Dennison, Jr.

There are nearly as many proposals for the structure of Jude's ingenious epistle as there are studies of the letter itself. The most elaborate and fascinating of these is by the prolific Ernest R. Wendland, whose literary work on the Hebrew and Greek testaments is uniformly stimulating and edifying if not provocative.[1] Wendland's magnificent chiasm is dazzling as well as fetchingly persuasive—its parallelism appears definitive. Yet no structural proposal is definitive this side of the eschaton. Thus, we place our modest suggestion into the discussion with the hope that it may enrich the already fertile discussion about our Lord's younger (?youngest) brother's literary and rhetorical style.[2]

What is most noticeable about Jude's style is the symmetry/parallelism of his construction. He is fond of repetition/duplication, even being noted for his penchant for triads/triplets—a three-peater (instead of a repeater), if you will. We are persuaded that this inclination to symmetry arises from his Semitic cultural background (i.e., Nazareth in Galilee in accomplished, if not studied, Jewish fashion). OT Semitic idiomatic and structural symmetry is well-attested in current literature on the topic. Jude was raised and nurtured in such a cultural and literary climate; his epistle is a reflection of the imprint which that culture left upon his creative and articulate pen, including the obvious OT influences upon his imagery.

[1] Ernest R. Wendland, "A Comparative Study of 'Rhetorical Criticism', Ancient and Modern—with Special Reference to the Larger Structure and Function of the Epistle of Jude." *Neotestamentica* 28/1 (1994): 193-228. Wendland's chiastic outline is found on pp. 211-12.

[2] Cf. the author's "Narrative Echoes: The Words of Brother Jesus in Brother Jude's Epistle." *Kerux: The Journal of Northwest Theological Seminary* 28/2 (September 2013): 3-14; available here: http://www.kerux.com/doc/2802A1.asp. NB also the author's audio lectures on the entire epistle available here: http://www.nwts.edu/audio/JTD/Jude.htm.

STRUCTURAL OUTLINE OF THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

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Explicit – Closing

Jude's opening introduction is symmetrically balanced by a conclusion in doxological style. That the self-identification of v. 1 is followed by a benediction (v. 2) argues for an intentional mirror reflection of praise and blessing in vv. 24-25. Jude opens projecting the union of his own soul (with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ) and the benedictory wishes of his own heart ("mercy, peace, love multiplied") upon his readers/hearers/believing Christian friends. He closes with yet another glimpse into the window of his own soul in *doxa* (twice over—v. 24 and v. 25; yet more symmetry!) extolling God the Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ who alone ("only", v. 25) are able to enrich the "bond-servants" of his brother-Lord and God with the presence (face to face) of eschatological glory. Indeed, a fitting eschatological doxological projection reflecting an equally benedictory inception. I am suggesting Jude uses a book-end symmetry in the *incipit* and the *explicit* of his letter. He begins as he ends (blessing God and the Lord Jesus Christ); he ends as he begins (blessing God and the Lord Jesus Christ).

The inclusio of divine persons in the opening and closing units reinforces this symmetry as well as this book-end distinction. In addition, the front-board and back-board inclusio has a chiastic pattern:

Jesus Christ (Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) (1)
God the Father (θεῷ πατρι) (1)
God the Savior (θεῷ σωτῆρι) (25)
Jesus Christ (Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) (25)

The mirror datives underscores the palistrophic nature of the sequence. The end of his remarks are as the beginning of his comments—enveloped in God and Jesus Christ. So too his benediction and doxology—enveloping his readers/hearers in God the Father and Jesus Christ the Lord.[3]

Next, Jude uses a formulaic address of affection for his audience: "beloved" (αγαπητοι), v. 3—a formula which is symmetrically mirrored in v. 20 (αγαπητοι). While αγαπητοι recurs in v. 17, it is ***not*** followed there by the word "faith" which characterizes the duplicate pattern of v. 3 (πιστει) and v. 20 (πιστει). Hence, the "beloved" believer's faith is commended in the unit that emphasizes faith's content ("once for all delivered", v. 3) mirrored in faith's actions (i.e., prayer, love, mercy, salvation, vv. 20-23). A further justification for juxtaposing these rhetorical units (v. 3 and vv. 20-23) is the shift in object which succeeds the one (υμιν) and precedes the other (υμεις).

This shift represents the characterization of the antithesis which lies at the heart of Jude's letter. This antithesis has been variously characterized as the "you"/"these/them" opposition (υμεις/ουτοι). In fact, radical antithesis between the believing segment of the community to whom Jude writes and the pretentious unbelief of the insidious intruders who have infiltrated, disrupted and threaten to subvert the faithful ἁγιοις comprises the body of this letter. A radical antithesis of apostates (v. 4) contrasted with the apostles (v. 17). The former men (**α**νθρωποι)—ungodly (**α**σεβεις), licentious (**α**σελγεια)—are the

[3] The relational and affectionate "you" (v. 2 and v. 25) also connects these beginning and ending units in symmetrical fashion, reinforcing the inclusio feature.

very opposite of the apostles (**α**ποστολων). The alliterative alpha (α) is a further suggestion of the antagonism which contrasts two further characters featured in the drama of the epistle—the false teachers vis-à-vis the teachers of the apostolic truth. Observe, then, that Jude has bracketed the ungodly interlopers (vv. 4-16) with the community of genuine faith (vv. 1-3 and 17-25). This symmetrical framework affirms the positive, redemptive, God-glorifying, Christ-glorifying and Spirit-edifying message of the epistle. Thus, it neutralizes any suggestion that the letter is too "harsh" and "negative" for a modern Christian audience. Being framed with identification in union with the Triune God ("you", "our", "us") places the antithesis in the very nature of the case vis-à-vis those who are identified with the fiery darkness of everlasting judgment, united in their devotion and affection ("these", "them", "those") to the very arena which contradicts the glory of God Triune.

The body of this letter (vv. 5-16) is symmetrically patterned on exemplary triads (again, Jude's fondness for patterns of threes)—three OT illustrations twice over: section I (vv. 5-10; section II (vv. 11-16). I have labeled this portion of the letter a redemptive-historical sandwich (vv. 5-16). Our Lord's brother first provides a retrospective glance to the history of redemption under Moses beginning with the exodus (v. 5) and ending with the death of Moses (v. 9). Jude then encloses his second three-some with Cain (the first from Adam, v. 11) and ends with the seventh from Adam (Enoch, v. 14). The Adamic and Mosaic eras provide a framed mirror of apostasy and fidelity—exodus wilderness generation versus Moses and murderous whiner Cain versus Enoch.

Each of these subunit sections sandwiched between the two laudatory, benedictory, Spirit-filled, doxological portions of the letter (vv. 1-3 and vv. 20-25 respectively[4]) possess further symmetrical elements. Following the list of the three OT examples, two positive figures emerge further sandwiched by characterizations of the apostate intruders who are subverting the Christian community to whom Jude is writing. The parallel characterization paradigms (vv. 8 and 10; vv. 12-13 and 16 respectively) expand the analysis of the ungodly lifestyle of the intruders—a lifestyle which mirrors the negative, sinful behavior of the OT groups of three. The use of the triad is also evident in the specific character traits/defects borne by the ungodly infiltrators. The pattern of v. 8 is: defile the flesh; reject authority; revile/blaspheme glories (δοξας). Verse 10 contains: blaspheme what they do not understand; blaspheme what they do know instinctually; act like irrational animals. Verse 12 contains a double triplet: reefs in the love feasts; feast without fear; care for themselves only; clouds without water; carried along by the wind; trees without fruit, twice dead—v. 13 continues with a triad: wild waves of the sea; wandering stars; reserved for black darkness. Verse 16 contains another double triad (as did v. 12): grumblers; fault-finders; follow their own lusts; arrogant mouths; flatterers; seek advantage over others.

It is striking that this entire sandwich (vv. 5-16) portrays two outstanding positive figures—Michael and Enoch (v. 9 and 14), both of whom present the heavenly arena of angelic supernaturalism to the audience. In sum, heaven's own residents, Michael, Enoch

[4] Both these bracketed character units (two for each subunit of vv. 5-10 and 11-16) are symmetrically linked by ουτοι ("these")—v. 8, 10, 12, 16. When Jude wishes to exegetically analyze the ungodly character of the intruders, he signals his exposition with the marker ουτοι (see below).

and the angelic hosts/myriads (μυριασιν), stand in stark antithesis to the apostates of OT history, even as the community of faith within the church to whom Jude writes stands in stark contrast to the pretentious, narcissistic unbelievers who have insinuated themselves into the community. Character matters to Jude; the fact that he parallels (replicates!) negative character four times within the redemptive-historical sandwich, while sandwiching (!) heavenly character at the same time is not only significant, it is a mark of literary and rhetorical genius. And as a further indicator of that genius, he signals his rhetorical intent with the same word leading off each line of characterization—ουτοι ("these") alerts us to the intruders in vv. 8, 10, 12, 16. Yet another clear structuring paradigm by this gifted craftsman used as a literary frame mirroring twice over the deleterious nature of the ungodly intruders, while placing the godly Michael and Enoch in stark relief.

NB: further support for the double subunit division in vv. 5-16 comes from the parity of content. In the UBS Greek text, vv. 5-10 contain 123 words. There are 124 words in vv. 11-16. Jude has balanced his two subunits with symmetry of verbal expression. Symmetry, symmetry, symmetry is evident at every point in this letter, even to the word-count in the body of the epistle. Careful craftsmanship indeed!

Jude also uses symmetrical anaphora to tie together the two subunits which follow the redemptive-historical sandwich of vv. 5-16. Notice υμεις δε αγαπητοι ("but you beloved" in v. 17 and again in v. 20. Beginning successive segments of a work in duplicate style is called anaphora. For Jude, the parallelism underscores the antithesis with "these" (ουτοι), the intruders (v. 16 and 19), who are devoid of the Holy Spirit (πνευμα μη εχοντες, "having not the Spirit"); but it also marks the unfolding of the character of the apostles whose eschatological revelation (v. 18) motivates the godly character of the beloved believers who possess the Holy Spirit in his fullness (vv. 20-23).

Finally, the doxology (vv. 24-25) contains one last fascinating symmetrical sandwich. It also contains the longest doxological (let alone benedictory) time continuum in the NT. Jude proclaims glory to God our Savior and (?even) the Lord Jesus Christ through all time—eternity past, time present, eternity future. Notice the symmetry sandwiching the present (v. 25).

προ παντος του αιωνος
και νυν και
εις παντας τους αιωνας

This unique doxology brackets the present with the past and the future. Jude does this so as to feature the non-eternal nature of the present—and yet the now time indelibly attached to eternity past (God's eternal past) and eternity future (God's eternal future). The believer is even now sandwiched between/attached to the glory of God (his very glory-presence) who is from all eternity to all eternity. The symmetrical και framing the νυν draws the "now" into the ineffable continuum of the ever-eternal, all-glorious God and Lord ("both now and"). Even now, O believer, your God and Savior has folded you in between the timeless continuum of his own eternity. Even now you belong to his eternity as you eternally belong to him. Amen!—*it is so*!!

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Thomas Hooker on the All-Sufficiency of Christ[1]

Grace is merely in God's hands to dispose of . . . [T]he heart of the poor sinner sees an absolute necessity of a change . . . and he goes to himself and his self-sufficiencies, and finding no succor there, he falls down before the Lord and begs mercy; and yet he sees himself unworthy of mercy, without which he must perish. He has nothing and he can do nothing to merit it; yet he is content that God should dispose of him as he thinks good—only (if it be possible) he prays that the Lord would show mercy to a poor forlorn creature. Now the sinner is prepared and fitted for Christ, as a graft for the stock. He is come [to be]. . . as little as [he] may be. All his swelling sufficiency is pared away. For he is not only brought to renounce his sin, but even his sufficiency and all his parts and abilities (which Adam did not need to do, had he stood in his innocence). In a word, [the poor sinner] is plucked from the first Adam . . . so that now the second Adam, Christ Jesus, may take possession of him "and be all in all in him" (as the apostle says). Now, the soul is a fit matter for Christ to work upon, namely, to make him a vessel fit to receive mercy and grace. When he has fitted him for mercy, he will give it to him; and when he has given him grace, he will maintain it, and increase it, and then quicken it, and crown it, and perfect it in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. And lastly, he will glorify himself in all these. Here is a right Christian indeed that expresses Christ in all. Christ preparing, Christ giving, Christ maintaining and increasing, and Christ quickening, and Christ crowning.[2]

[1] See bibliographical note here: http://www.kerux.com/doc/1702A4.asp.
[2] From *The Soules Humiliation* (London, 3rd edition, 1640) 131-33. Spelling has been modernized.

K:JNWTS 29/1 (May 2014): 9-13

Extravagance

Genesis 49; Mt 25:31-46

Stuart R. Jones

What comes to your mind when you hear the word "extravagance"? Most of the time when I heard it growing up, it was not used to describe some good behavior. We lived like most middle class families in the 1950's. I had a little allowance that was to carry me through the week. I could buy an occasional popsicle, comic book or fountain coke. But I could not buy just anything anytime. Even if we had been rich, there were limited things. No flat screen TV's or smart phones.

I remember when I was very upset with my dad because he would not spend the extra dollar to get me white tennis shoes instead of the lousy two-dollar black ones I ended up with. It meant I was consigned to be a nerd—though I was probably destined to continue as a nerd even with white sneakers; changing colors would not have changed my status anyway. I suppose that is one reason why I really am amazed when I hear about extravagantly priced Air Jordans and riots and crime committed to get a pair. But then, now I am old and never have kept up with fashion so why should I now?

We have just finished the Christmas season and some people did not get all they wanted, whether it was a Red Rider BB gun or a smart phone. It is not wrong to want a few things, but we too easily get depressed when we don't get them because our hearts are not happy with God's provision. Greed is not about a magic number where greed automatically kicks in several thousand dollars above the median national income. If my parents saw how a lower middle class family lived today, they would think it to be extravagant.

In one major way, greed starts to kick in when God is not the center of our lives—when desiring to honor Christ is not the major goal of our lives. There is another place (other than around the Christmas tree) when we see greed on display and some shock surprises at what people end up with. Greed sometimes breaks out when it comes time to receive an inheritance.

Jacob's Testament

Our text presents Jacob's final blessings or his last will and testament for all twelve of his sons—sons who will be the founders of the twelve tribes of Israel. In a TV movie, this would be the place where the surviving family members gather, the will is read and they all get surprised. Will the sons all get disinherited and the money go to a mistress or be placed in a trust fund for the support of a pet canary? As in the movie, there is an element of suspense here, but the inheritance is a promissory note concerning the future rather than immediate cash or real estate.

Jacob's oral testament is like the opening of a will—I think *"nuncupative will"* is the term; but this event is also like the announcement of a verdict at a judgment seat. Jesus combines the concept of a verdict and an inheritance in Matthew 25:34: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (KJV).

Genesis 49 might seem rather remote in its value for us today. But the courtroom sort of drama of waiting to hear the inheritance verdicts for the twelve sons of Jacob gives us a seed of the future inheritance verdict Jesus speaks of in Matthew 25. There can be no more dramatic and yet real and practical verdict than the one Jesus talks about—the verdict that awaits us all at the end of history. On the surface, the verdict seems to be related to merciful conduct, but on a deeper level Jesus is relating the conduct to himself and the unity he has with his people. Let's explore the seeds of this judgment in Genesis 49.

Genesis 49 Blessings

The blessing of Genesis 49 contain an element of forward looking predictive prophesy. This point needs to be kept in mind as we look at the blessings. The details of how these blessings or prophetic statements were fulfilled—or even how to translate them and what they mean in detail—are not always easy to determine, but the big picture is pretty clear.

The two sons or tribes who get major attention are the tribes of Judah and Joseph. They have the two longest or most extensive comments in their blessings (vv. 8-12, 22-26 respectively). Both of them are spoken of in terms that reflect a good and hopeful future. If we use the mixed image Jesus employs in Matthew 25, we would say Judah and Joseph are the two biggest sheep on the right hand and maybe Simeon and Levi are the two biggest goats on the left hand (Gen. 49:5-7). But the first born, Reuben, looks like a big goat too (Gen. 49:3-4).

We might expect Joseph to get greater attention than the other sons or tribes because in the previous chapter Jacob adopts his two sons and blesses them (Gen. 48:13-20).

But in verses 8 through 12 of Genesis 49, we encounter a surprise—Judah is given a rich blessing. We are set up to be surprised by the way in which the blessings start out. At first, it only looks like Jacob is paying back the 'goats' for their disloyalty. Reuben gets downgraded. An event from the past is cited to explain the downgrade. He had slept with his father's concubine (v. 4)—probably as a play for his father's position and supremacy as much as from any lust motive. And this power play backfires, instead of exaltation he gets lowered. All alone, this looks like a payback according to works done in Jacob's lifetime.

Simeon and Levi get a kind of curse instead of a blessing and the past action of killing the Shechemites is the reason given (vv. 5-7; cf. Gen. 34:25-30). They get paid back for paying back the Shechemites—seemingly because their payback was over the top.

Now if you are Judah, you might start to get worried. If people are getting paid back for the things they have done during Jacob's lifetime and for the grief that they caused father Jacob, then Judah might be in a lot of trouble. There are no good verdicts so far. If you are the other boys, you are probably getting nervous.

So we come to Judah who had the idea to sell Joseph into Egypt (Gen. 37:25-27). Well, it's better than killing him is the lame excuse. But Reuben also provided a temporary escape from murder when he suggested putting Joseph in the pit (Gen. 37:18-24), yet that diversion from murder did not keep Reuben from being disinherited.

Look at what else was true of Judah. If we read between the lines of his earlier life, Judah seems to have left his brothers to go off alone. Judah married a Canaanite woman (Gen. 38:1-3)—clearly a break with the way Abraham, Isaac and Jacob obtained wives. Judah also engaged the sexual services of a woman he thought was a prostitute (Gen. 38:12-19). Judah did not perform his duty to his daughter in law Tamar, in providing a replacement husband. Judah is ready to show no mercy for his daughter-in-law's sexual misdeed when he is the guilty *other* party.

To be sure, we see better things with Judah at the end, when he takes risks to recover Benjamin from Egypt (Gen. 43-44). He gradually takes more leadership and responsibility among the brothers. As a leader, he even offers himself as a substitute slave for Benjamin (Gen. 44:33).

There is something heroic and Christ-like in that regard. But on a balance, if ever a bad verdict seemed to be on the way, it would seem to be so for Judah. But it does not happen exactly that way. One explanation is the logic found in Romans 9. Paul provides insight on how to look at God's working in the lives of the Old Testament patriarchal fathers. They were not chosen to be blessed by God because of their goodness or because God foresaw that they would become good people. Jacob was blessed above Esau because of God's sovereign plan and design—even though Jacob used some trickery on the human side of things. Nothing about Ephraim made him better than Manasseh when Jacob gave him the greater blessing in chapter 48. So what will it be for Judah? Human reasoning might say, "Well maybe his good works outweighed his bad works." That's the way some people think you get to heaven. It's a comparative value calculation. God does business and is looking for a profit. But this is not the way to heaven.

The Way of Salvation

In the New Testament, we learn that we must receive God's forgiveness and salvation as a free gift. That peculiar teaching of Jesus about sheep and goats and giving cups of cold water sounds like good works that earn something, but, in fact, they are deeds that are performed unselfconsciously. Lord, you say we fed you, gave you water, visited you in prison? We never remember doing any such thing. Ah, but you did it for my disciples and what you do for them, you do for me.

But then does this mean we get to heaven by feeding everyone and hoping we don't have a bad day or run out of food when one of Jesus' real disciples comes along? Jesus is not

talking about buying our way into heaven by good works or feeding people. The unself-conscious way in which the sheep behave toward the sheep of Jesus in ministering to each other seems to speak to an instinctive way of acting that is placed in the redeemed creature.

Judah has some bad deeds in his past. On an individual level, he seems to repent later in his life when he shows concern for his father. But we know that what makes Judah special is not anything that Judah ever did. It is the person who comes from Judah that makes him special.

Jesus the sinless Son of God will come from Judah. We might wonder, why not from Joseph? Wasn't Joseph a better person? I think he probably was. But God chooses the lesser things of this world to glorify himself. No human ancestor of Jesus Christ will ever be able to measure up to the greatness of Jesus Christ.

Both Judah and Joseph receive blessings. The blessings on Judah seem to focus on fruitfulness. Some commentators translate verse 22 to say Joseph is a wild colt. But most English translations focus on Joseph as a fruitful bough. The idea of fruitfulness is very much present at the end of verse 25 and in 48:16. This makes it look like Joseph is the one who really caries the promise of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who are to be a multitude.

The blessing on Joseph describes the multitude side of God's earlier promises. But there is something in the promise of Judah that stands out rather uniquely. Judah has the promise of royalty—the emergence of a new dimension in the promises of God. The multitude and riches of Jacob are one thing. But the royalty of Judah's line is enhanced by four images:

1. Verse 10 describes a scepter. Some of the verse is hard to translate, but the royal image of a scepter seems pretty clear—a symbol of royalty and rule.

2. *Obedience and tribute* reinforce this line of thought in verse 10

Then there are two extravagant images presented that make us think of royalty.

3. This man washes his clothes in wine (v. 11). Not plain old water, but wine.

4. And he tethers his donkey to a vine, a choice vine. One that produces Dom Perignon.

Why! You don't hitch your horse to an expensive porcelain vase because it will get broken. In the same way, you probably don't tether your colt to a vine because it will ruin a precious plant. Such extravagant behavior is the sort of thing kings do to show off their utter indifference to the ordinary values that constraint ordinary people. Comparative values are thrown to the wind.

Judah's Eschatologically Extravagant Blessings

There was a song some years ago about the guy who flies his Lear Jet to Nova Scotia to see a total eclipse of the sun. We generally look down on such extravagance. Jesus, who is the King of kings and Lord of lords lived most of his earthly life in poverty to show how different his kingdom was from the kingdoms of this world that show off their power by extravagance. But we know there was one day in which Jesus accepted the extravagance of being anointed with a perfume—perfume that would cost a Roman soldier something like a years' wages. That extravagance was a message: he may be a different sort of King, but he is no less a King than the most powerful emperor in Rome.

His preparation for death by an extravagant anointing was because his death would be an extravagant death. Our many varied sins require an extravagant sacrifice and payment. It was the most precious life that ever was poured out for the lives of enemies who deserve to die for their sins. John 3:16 is ultimate extravagance. The extravagant life-styles we see in this world are only out of place in this world. They are a failure to follow Christ. But following Christ ends in a new extravagant world of blessing where he owns all things and shares them with his sheep.

Reviews

K:JNWTS 29/1 (May 2014): 14

R. T. France, *Luke*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013. 404pp. Cloth. ISBN: 978-0-8010-9235-0. $39.99.

This is the last work to flow from the pen of R(ichard) T(homas) France. It is the posthumous testament to his career which ended in the year of our Lord's grace 2012. The commentary is clearly written, contains brief albeit suggestive insights and is beautifully illustrated. However, it should not be equated with the penetrating and detailed work which is found in France's other two commentaries on the synoptic gospels: *Matthew* (2007; 1233pp.) and *Mark* (2002; 757pp.). What we were spoiled in receiving with an embarrassment of riches in the previous synoptic commentaries is absent in the present volume. We will not speculate on the factors which have produced the difference; we can only lament the difference in question.

This is not a volume to compete with Fitzmyer (1982-1985; 1685pp.), save that it is more evangelical. Nor is it the equal of Nolland (3 volumes, 1989-1993; 1481pp.) or Bock (2 volumes, 1994-1996; 1250pp.), although it could have been more than equal to both given France's genius with regard to the "finality" of Christ (cf. his superb *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 1971).

This is an easy read, very 'user friendly', but it does not take us deeply and richly into the mind of God as revealed to and in Luke. A narrative biblical-theological approach to this largest of the four gospels remains the order of the day. As for France, we salute his career and the legacy of riches found elsewhere in his *oeuvre*.

—James T. Dennison, Jr.

K:JNWTS 29/1 (May 2014): 14-15

Richard J. Dillon, *The Hymns of Saint Luke: Lyricism and Narrative Strategy in Luke 1-2*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 2013. 181pp. Paper. ISBN: 0-915170-49-3. $15.00.

In 1985, Stephen Farris wrote *The Hymns of Luke's Infancy Narratives: Their Origin, Meaning and Significance*. This was a helpful foray into the theology of the four Advent canticles of the third gospel. Raymond Brown followed in 1993 with his important (if sometimes disappointing) *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives of Matthew and Luke*. Dillon has built upon this previous work on Luke 1 and 2 (and more; cf. his extensive bibliography [pp. 157-66] which exploits German critical scholarship) with a more penetrating literary and narrative analysis of the Magnificat (1:46-55), Benedictus (1:68-79), Gloria (2:14) and Nunc Dimittis (2:29-35).[1] For each

[1] Cf. this author's "Simeon's Farewell Song" here: http://kerux.com/doc/1603A2.asp.

pericope, Dillon provides a thorough review of the text, some speculation on its origin (Luke alone under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is sufficient in our opinion; all other theories about his sources are spun out of the fertile illusions of modern critical scholars), integration with the unfolding argument (Dillon calls it "macrocontext") of Luke's early gospel chapters, and a conclusion. The narrative and theological (in fact, biblical-theological insights) are stimulating. There is more depth and wealth of insight here than in Farris or Brown. What is most interesting is Dillon's use of Acts and Paul to reinforce the redemptive-historical narrative which Luke unfolds. This is particularly helpful for the seamless narrative of the life of Jesus Christ with the life of the early church and the mission of Luke's companion, Paul. The reader will be benefitted immensely by Dillon's explorations and connections. If his vocabulary (chiaroscuro [Italian for "coloration of light and shade"], vaticinium [Latin for "prophecy" or "prediction", etc.) is occasionally ostentatious, his exegesis is enlightening. This is definitely a book required for serious work on the songs anticipating and greeting the One whom angels and glorified saints hymn as eternally begotten Son of God, Savior of depraved and totally unable sinners, the Long-Expected Jesus and Desire of the Nations.

—James T. Dennison, Jr.

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Delbert Burkett, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Jesus*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2011. Cloth. 576pp. ISBN: 978-1-4051-9362-7. $49.95.

The Blackwell Companion to Jesus is a helpful disappointment. It is helpful in that it exposes most readers to unfamiliar perspectives on Jesus. It is a disappointment in that the majority of entries represent the far extreme of liberal Biblical scholarship. Here we are referring to those articles that deal with the Jesus of the New Testament and modern Christology. We are not as surprised that those entries which discuss the perspectives on Jesus from other world religions do not represent the historical Jesus. For they discuss each religion's re-creation of Jesus in the image of its own religious convictions. But this is also overwhelmingly the case with many of the entries that are supposed to come from the Christian perspective. This degree of freight given to the critical far left is not representative of all the Blackwell Companions, such as the one on the apostle Paul. But it is here in spades. This is not a volume for the lay reader.

With the size of this volume, our review will necessarily be selective. As Delbert Burkett indicates in his opening introduction, this companion deals with Jesus in the New Testament; Jesus beyond the New Testament; Jesus in world religions; philosophical and historical perspectives on Jesus; modern manifestations of Jesus; and Jesus in Art, Fiction and Film. The first section on Jesus in the New Testament offers articles on Jesus in each of the four gospels, in Q, Paul, the general epistles, the book of Revelation and the Hebrew Bible respectively. Of the articles on each of the gospels, the only one that presents several stimulating comments on the literary/thematic aspects of its gospel is that on the gospel of John by Mary L. Coloe. The other three are primarily a morass of higher

critical evaluations of the text. The article on the Jesus of Q shows the reductionism of this scholarship; the others are not particularly helpful either.

The section on Jesus beyond the New Testament includes several articles. The first on Jesus in the Apocryphal gospels (such as the infancy narratives) may be useful as an introduction for those not familiar with these texts. Other chapters include: Jesus in the Gnostic gospels; the history of the Christology of the creeds from Nicaea (325 A.D.) to the second council of Nicaea (787 A.D.); and a concluding chapter on theories of the atonement from the Old Testament including liberal critiques of penal substitution. These last two have some value as historical overviews.

Because most Christian readers are unfamiliar with their subject matter, perhaps the more useful articles are those exposing the reader to the perspective of Jesus found in other world religions. Such understanding can be useful in Christian witness. The perceptive reader will notice that those religions that present a positive assessment of Jesus remake Jesus into the ideals of their own religion. Thus, in Buddhism, Jesus is a Bodhisattva; in Hinduism he is a Yogi and one of many ways to God; in Islam he is a prophet. All of this has become more familiar to Christians in this multicultural age and further investigating these matters beyond the surface can be useful. For instance, the Jesus of the New Age movement is simply the Jesus of classical Hinduism. As missionaries in India once found the people impervious to their witness (since Christ was viewed as simply one more way to God), so it is with those to whom we speak who have accepted the New Age perspective on Jesus. And the emphasis in Islam on God's sovereignty and mercy should not mislead us. Muslims do not believe in the total moral inability of human beings before a holy God. Thus, they do not see the necessity of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection. What should be clear to all Christians who read these accounts is that all these other religions make Jesus into an enlightened moral teacher or prophet. None see him as the unique God-man who has satisfied the eternal righteousness and wrath of God by his obedience and penal sacrifice. Thus, for them, he is not the one who has been justified in his resurrection. These religions are essentially Pelagian and reimage Jesus in their own moralistic likeness. Such a Jesus provides no hope for the conscience which knows itself to be under the wrath of God. It provides no transition, by God's grace, from wrath to eternal peace in the presence of the Almighty.

The denial of the resurrection of Jesus is especially evident in the chapter dealing with that subject by Michael Martin. This chapter argues explicitly against the historical veracity of Jesus' resurrection. We will not take the time here to deal with these arguments. However, we believe that the arguments in this chapter do not present a compelling case and do not deal adequately with all the evidence at our disposal. Instead, Martin starts with the assumption of unbelief and squeezes selective data in that direction. We leave it to others or another time to deal with these issues in detail.

The section on modern manifestations of Jesus includes chapters on modern western Christology: African and Asian Christology; various liberation theologies (Black, Feminist and Gay); and Jesus in American culture. The articles on these subjects can expose ministers to areas of theology with which they are not familiar, but most of the articles (once again) are not edifying for lay audiences.

Here we will expand our comments beyond the preceding. Modern liberation theologies go back to Jurgen Moltmann's *Theology of Hope*. They represent many genuine forms of oppression: the oppression of peasants in South America; the oppression of African Americans by being captured against their wills and shipped off in horrible conditions to America, where many of them experienced harsh lives of unwilling servitude and later lynching; the oppression of women by male chauvinists and the murder and physical abuse of homosexuals. In many cases, the ruling elite, the majority or simply individuals justified this oppression by a form of all too worldly Christianity. In our opinion, the proper response to this oppression is freedom from the bondage of sin and resurrection union with Christ in his free heavenly kingdom. And it involves the recognition that others so united to Christ are deserving of this same dignity and freedom. Thus, even now, we must not oppress them, but treat them in light of the fact that this heavenly freedom has come to them. Christ alone is their Lord. And to the rest of the world, we must represent this freedom by not oppressing our fellow men and women, boys and girls. Instead, we are to show them by our life of service that we invite them to be united to Christ alone as their Lord. Many in the church have taken this road to freedom whether it is Indian peasants from South America, African Americans, battered and emotionally abused women, or homosexuals who have turned to Christ.

However, the modern liberation theologies discussed in this book have formed a different response. They have responded to being dominated by seeking to dominate in return. They do not seek to be united with their oppressors in one heavenly and free communion in Christ. Instead, they seek to harbor an identity focused on commonality by the standards of this world. And they use this identity to oppress their oppressors in return—all this in the name of liberation. Why do we make such sweeping judgments? It has to do with the form of this-worldly eschatology/hope that is the basis of all these theologies. Their this-worldly eschatologies of liberation are the opposite of their oppressors' this-worldly eschatologies. Their oppressors sought their own this-worldly liberty from suffering and oppression by oppressing others. By using them, they secured their own agendas. Implicitly, all oppressors have a this-worldly eschatology, one in which their hope is centered in this world. This is true of the oppressors even if they control others by telling them to put their hope in another world. It is about power and privilege. This is the difference between a worldly eschatology and a heavenly one. When people focus their hope in the limited resources of this world, they must amass them at all costs, even to the oppression of others. (Thus, even if we say with some economists that raw resources are abundant, still the time required for the labor to develop those resources is limited. And when one refuses to compete honestly with others by cooperation because this world is one's god, such individuals oppress others, if possible.) On the other hand, the riches of heaven given by the grace of Christ are as limitless and unfathomable as the endless life of God himself. And they are given by God himself. No human being can earn them for us. And all may partake equally in these riches in God without anyone lacking anything. There is no reason for human oppression or privilege when God himself and his heavenly life are our highest aspiration.

It follows that all the oppressors of this world have oppressed their fellows to use them for their own worldly purposes. Or they have oppressed them to gain something they

thought they could earn, even if it was an afterlife (a la the Egyptian pharaohs). And thus they have conceived even this afterlife in this-worldly terms. This suggests once again that all oppressors have oppressed others for a this-worldly goal. Thus, as long as people respond to them with another this-worldly eschatology, they, in return, are engaged in the same cycle of oppression. They are simply oppressing and silencing their oppressors. They have become the oppressor. And we believe this has happened in these so-called liberation theologies, even if unwittingly. They cannot truly claim to liberate as long as their theology comes ultimately from the same this-worldly hope as their oppressors. Someone must win this game.

Thus, we believe that the form of Black liberation theology represented in this volume does not provide the liberty African Americans or anyone else needs. Whether Jesus was of African descent (as the article appears to argue) or Caucasian descent is unimportant for the liberty he brings to Africans and Caucasians because he does not side with any race over against another. He was certainly a Jew (and probably of a swarthy first century Jewish appearance of neither Caucasian nor African Negro descent). However, this has significance for the fact that he is the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham and David in the history of redemption. This does not equate to a Jewish liberation theology of power in the present. Instead, Jesus is supremely the seed of Adam, and as such the head of a new humanity in which there is no distinction between Jew and Gentle (or among Gentiles!). That is, as Christ became an infant to save infants, and a young person to save young people, and a grown adult to save grown adults, so he identified himself with all races (by becoming the seed of Adam like them) to save all races in Adam. And so in heaven, he is the head of a new humanity in which there is perfect equality. There is no distinction of privilege among races in heaven, only a harmony of union in Christ. This is the liberating message for African Americans and all peoples in Christ Jesus.

And a similar equality of dignity in Christ (even now) is also the privilege of all women in Christ. And so those in the church are called to treat them with equal dignity even now, as those exalted in heaven. This is where women in Christ find their present consolation and future hope, not in a this-worldly feminist theology of liberation.

The most unbelievable article in this collection is the one by Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., claiming that Jesus was a homosexual. The error of Jennings' claim is evident even from a historical point of view! There is no reason to believe (as the article argues) that the affection of Jesus for John (who lay on Jesus' breast in public meeting of his disciples) represented anything more that the public display of a non-sexual affection of a master for his disciple. If the act implied anything different, this would not have been lost on the other disciples, who as first century Jews would have grossly offended, to say the least. Nor would it have been lost on Judas, who would have brought this report to the Sanhedrin. But we have no evidence that Jesus was ever accused of being a homosexual. And it is inconceivable that someone of Jesus' reputation who was a homosexual in first century Palestine could have avoided this criticism. Someone with so many opponents and such a public life would not have escaped detection within that culture. And Jesus would have been rejected by his fellow Jews as one deserving death. If nothing else, as we have noted, had John's lying on Jesus' breast indicated homosexuality, it would not have been lost on Jesus' disciples and Judas, the informant of the Sanhedrin. Jennings's

view cannot stand the weight of the passage he uses to prove it, when that text is considered in its historical context.

The fact that this was the Jewish view of homosexuality is evident to a broad range of interpreters of Paul's letter to the Romans 1:18-32 (even Robert Jewett in the Hermeneia series). According to such interpreters, this passage lists a number of practices that were considered by first century Jews to be Gentile vices. Tops on the list was homosexuality. This is further supported by the influence of the Hebrew Bible on the Jewish people since it forbids homosexuality, considering it so serious that when Israel's penal system was ruled by the Hebrew Bible it was a capital crime.

We might also ask why the editor of *The Blackwell Companion to Jesus* allowed Jennings to appeal to the pericope of the woman caught in adultery in John 8 without explanation. For this text does not appear in any manuscripts of John's gospel until the fifth century A.D. and is considered spurious by the vast majority of New Testament scholars.

The volume ends with a discussion of Jesus in literature and film for those literary and film buffs among us. Unfortunately, these portrayals do not always represent the best the literati or cinema has to offer.

On the whole, this companion is highly slanted in the extreme higher critical direction, but some of its articles can be useful for those trained to sift through its skeptical morass. If you choose to do so, you might end by refreshing your soul with the heavenly God-man of the New Testament. Besides the Holy Scriptures themselves, *The Coming of the Kingdom* by Herman Ridderbos or "Rabboni" by Geerhardus Vos might provide such a refresher.

—Scott F. Sanborn