

## BOOK REVIEW

Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005). Hdbk. US\$31.99.

In the preface to her commentary on 1 Peter, Jobes briefly describes three contributions she hopes to add to the heritage of Petrine studies: (1) a new theory on the historical background of the book, (2) an interpretation that is well-informed by the LXX, and (3) an analysis of the Greek of 1 Peter showing how an ‘uneducated’ apostle Peter could have written Greek that is supposedly of high quality. These will serve as the organizing principles of this review.

As a lead into her theory of the historical background of 1 Peter, Jobes begins by discussing briefly whether or not the recipients of the letter are literally ‘foreigners’ and ‘aliens’ (cf. *parepidemos* in 1 Pet. 1.1 and *paroikos* in 2.11). Closely tied to this issue is the ethnicity of the recipients: are they Gentile or Jewish? The dominating view among modern commentators has been that the recipients are Gentile natives of Asia Minor whose designation as ‘foreigners’ and ‘aliens’ is metaphorical. These commentators often come to this conclusion, says Jobes, because of 1 Pet. 1.18 and 1 Pet. 4.3. 1 Peter 1.18 refers to the ‘useless way of life [the recipients] inherited from [their] ancestors’, and 1 Pet. 4.3 lists a series of vices characterized as ‘things the Gentiles like to do’, in which the recipients were apparently entangled before their conversion. Modern commentators claim that it would be unlikely for Peter to speak of Judaism in such a derogatory manner as is found in 1 Pet. 1.18, and furthermore, it is unlikely that first-century Diaspora Jews would have lived lives characterized by the terms of 1 Pet. 4.3. Jobes claims that this interpretation is merely an assumption based on a ‘complete lack of historical evidence’ (p. 26). She proposes that the recipients were Jewish Christians who were converted prior to living in Asia Minor (pp. 26-27). Accordingly, the labels ‘foreigner’ and ‘alien’

are literal descriptors. Her argument primarily relies upon the allusions in the text that would be more readily understood if the recipients were Jewish. She suggests that those who read 1 Pet. 1.18 as evidence for a Gentile audience should keep reading into verse 19, which refers to Christ as a 'blameless and spotless lamb'. This, according to Jobes, 'clearly alludes to the old covenant's sacrificial system, which *was* in fact empty of ultimate redemptive value in comparison with the blood of Jesus Christ' (p. 23, italics hers). As for 1 Pet. 4.3, Jobes, citing Calvin (*The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and the First and Second Epistles of St Peter* [trans. W.B. Johnston; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963]) and J. Baumgarten's essay, 'Art in the Synagogue: Some Talmudic Views' (in S. Fine [ed.], *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue* [New York: Routledge, 1999], pp. 71-86), argues for the plausibility that first-century Diaspora Jews may have assimilated pagan cultural norms to some degree (p. 24). Thus, the description of the recipients' sinful previous way of life in 1 Pet. 4.3 does not automatically make a Jewish audience impossible, neither does it necessarily preclude a Gentile audience.

If the recipients were literally foreigners in Asia Minor, from where did they come? In a nutshell, Jobes argues that the recipients were Jewish Christians expelled from Rome by Emperor Claudius in 49 CE. They were relocated to *colonia* in the regions of Asia Minor listed in 1 Pet. 1.1. Her theory has five main tenets (p. 39): (1) Claudius was aggressive at expanding the Roman Empire by colonization; (2) these colonies were typically populated by deportations from Rome and other urban centers; (3) there is historical evidence that Claudius expelled people who were connected somehow with 'Chrestus'; (4) the Apostle Peter is the stated author of the letter; and (5) ancient tradition places Peter in Rome during the reign of Claudius, and this tradition continues to be cogently argued.

Jobes supports the first tenet of her theory by referring to the fact that Claudius established cities in all five of the regions listed in 1 Pet. 1.1, and built many roads as well (pp. 29-30). Jobes argues that Claudius established *colonia* either by conferring *civitas* (citizenship) upon existing cities or by 'pumping Roman money and colonists into small towns that had become strategic due to changing political circumstances' (p. 29). This is an important starting-point for her theory, which could have been made stronger if she had cited primary sources as support. In addition, her claim that the administration of Claudius

was ‘characterized by conquest and expansion’ is somewhat of an over-statement. While Claudius is traditionally remembered as having been somewhat profligate in conferring *civitas* upon provincials, his only real ‘conquest’ was that of Britain, which, according to Suetonius, was ‘of little importance’ (*Life of Claudius* 17 [Rolfe translation, available at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/suet-claudius-rolfe.html>]).

Jobes supports the second tenet of this argument by referring to how the ‘emperors’ would populate the newly-designated colonies, namely by deporting people from Rome (or other Roman cities) to these colonies (p. 30). She notes how the decision regarding who to deport to these colonies was often based on religion, ethnicity, or occupation (p. 30). However, her argument again suffers due to the lack of examples from primary sources. Essentially, this point is really meant to be a bridge into the next tenet.

Having claimed that Roman emperors would populate colonies by deporting people to them, Jobes goes on to argue that the expulsion of Jews from Rome in 49 CE (referred to in Acts 18.2) was for the purpose of populating the *colonia* in Asia Minor mentioned in 1 Pet. 1.1. The primary extra-biblical reference Jobes gives here is that of Suetonius, ‘since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, [Claudius] expelled them from Rome’ (*Life of Claudius* 25 [Rolfe]). Jobes deals briefly with the difficulties regarding this quotation (e.g. its relationship to a similar quotation from Dio Cassius—who claims that Claudius did not really expel them, but only forbade them from meeting together [*Roman History* 60.6.6]—and Orosius), but does not convincingly argue that her position is any less an ‘assumption’ than the interpretation of modern commentators.

Regarding tenet four, Jobes argues that Peter was indeed the author of the letter (pp. 14-19). To do so, she first calls into question the legitimacy of pseudonymity in the epistolary genre. She claims that pseudonymity was an accepted literary trait of certain genres (e.g. Wisdom literature), but she doubts that it was acceptable in personal correspondence, unless the alleged author had been dead for centuries (p. 16), otherwise it most likely would have been rejected as forgery. For Jobes, there is no reason to assume that the stated author of the letter is not the actual author. Secondly, she appeals to the *verba Christi* in 1 Peter as reflecting ‘episodes from Jesus’ life when the apostle Peter was present’ (p. 18). Finally, she appeals to the theology of the letter as reflecting an earlier stage of development in the church rather than a

later one (p. 18). Theological themes like the suffering of Christ and the less-developed eschatology (as compared to John's writing) are taken to suggest an earlier composition date (p. 18). Moreover, Jobes suggests that the names of the regions in 1 Pet. 1.1 may suggest a date prior to 72 CE, when Galatia and Cappadocia were combined into one military command (p. 18). That is, inscriptions prior to 72 CE listed Galatia and Cappadocia separately; from 72 CE on, the terminology in the inscriptions changed. It is likely that many scholars will take issue with Jobes on Petrine authorship; however, those who take issue with her will be forced to answer some very good questions.

Finally, the fifth tenet of her theory regarding the historical context of the recipients asks whether or not Peter and the recipients had any connection prior to the Claudian expulsion in 49 CE. After admitting a 'lack of extant historical validation' regarding the tradition that places Peter in Rome, Jobes argues for its plausibility. She relies very heavily on D. Wenham ('Did Peter Go to Rome in AD 42?', *TynBul* 23 [1972], pp. 94-102) in this part of her argument. The problem in doing so, which Jobes essentially admits (p. 34), is that Wenham's interpretation of the cryptic 'another place' in Acts 12.17 as being Rome—a foundational point in his argument—has been widely dismissed by scholars. Moreover, Jobes does not really attempt to defend Wenham's interpretation. Thus, the weakness of Wenham's argument becomes a weakness of Jobes' argument.

The second major contribution to Petrine studies Jobes hopes to make with her commentary is an interpretation that is well-informed by the LXX. More specifically, Jobes intends to show that Peter does not merely proof-text when he cites the Old Testament; rather, he bridges the context of the Old Testament passages to the context of the recipients of the letter (p. xi). This is a real strength of this commentary. For example, in the exegesis of 1 Pet. 3.8-12, Jobes (in a bit of an aside) shows how the use of Psalm 33 LXX (Psalm 34 Eng.) 'echoes throughout the first half of Peter's letter' (p. 220). The comparison below (adapted from Jobes, pp. 221-23) shows the parallels between Psalm 33 LXX and 1 Peter.

1. Both the psalm and 1 Peter start with a blessing to God:

Ps. 33.2 LXX

1 Pet. 1.3

'I will bless the Lord at all times'

'Blessed be the God and Father  
of our Lord Jesus Christ'

2. The result of seeking the Lord was deliverance from sojourning (*paroikia*):

Ps. 33.5 LXX	1 Pet. 1.17
‘and from all my sojournings he delivered me’	in fear [of God] live out your time of sojourning’

3. The absence of shame for the righteous is common to the two:

Ps. 33.6 LXX	1 Pet. 2.6
‘come to [the Lord]...and your faces will never be put to shame’	‘the one who trusts in [the Lord] will never be put to shame’

4. The benefits for those who fear the Lord are found in both texts:

Ps. 33.8 LXX	1 Pet. 1.17
‘The angel of the Lord camps around those who fear him and he will deliver them’	‘in fear [of God] live out your time of sojourning’

5. The responsiveness of God to the suffering of righteousness:

Ps. 33.18	1 Pet. 3.12
‘the righteous cried out and the Lord heard them and from all prayer’ their affliction he delivered them’	‘the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and his ears [are turned] toward their prayer’

6. The ‘many afflictions’ from which the righteous are delivered are mentioned in both:

Ps. 33.20	1 Pet. 1.6
‘many are the afflictions of the righteous, and from all of them he will rescue them’	‘though it is necessary for a little while to suffer many kinds of trials’

7. The redemption of the servants of the Lord:

Ps. 33.22	1 Pet. 1.18
‘the Lord will redeem the lives of his servants’	‘not with perishable things—silver or gold —you have been redeemed’

Jobes argues how these parallels with the LXX (as well as others throughout 1 Peter) demonstrate Peter’s concern to contextualize the message of the Old Testament passages he quotes for application in the lives of the Diaspora Jews who, as Jobes argues, were suffering unjustly in the foreign land in which they were living. The hopes and promises of Psalm 33 LXX, though they originally applied to David, were now recontextualized to encourage their new recipients.

Finally, Jobes hopes to demonstrate that the quality of 1 Peter's Greek is not too high for Peter to have written. Jobes handles this topic primarily in an excursus at the end of the commentary. Through a series of syntactical studies based on a methodology created by R.A. Martin (see p. 329), Jobes compares the Greek of 1 Peter to that of Josephus, Polybius, 1 Thessalonians and Hebrews 5–9. The studies indicate that the first language of the author of 1 Peter was likely not Greek. However, the study indicates a considerable Semitic influence quantitatively. Thus, it 'opens the way for considering Semitic authors for whom Greek was a second language' (p. 337). Jobes argues that Peter, because he lived and operated a fishing business in the cross-roads town of Capernaum, would have picked up Greek—and probably had above-average fluency in the language—through bilingual interaction. In other words, because of the nature of his hometown and his business, he would have been forced to learn Greek along the way, though likely not in a formal setting. Although Jobes admits that more study needs to be done to determine if the rhetoric of 1 Peter requires an author formally trained in the subject, her study indicates that dismissing Petrine authorship on the basis of the supposed high quality of Greek and lack of formal education of Peter may be too quick a move.

Overall I would recommend this commentary to any person studying 1 Peter. Jobes is an excellent exegete, and her background in Old Testament and LXX studies helps her to elucidate the text of 1 Peter. Moreover, the commentary is very refreshing because of its pastoral nature. Jobes writes in such a manner that the readers of the commentary will readily understand not only how the message of 1 Peter applied to the original readers, but also how it applies in their lives.

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