

Eric F. Mason and Troy W. Martin, eds., *Reading 1-2 Peter and Jude: A Resource for Students*, Resources for Biblical Study 77; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014. Pp. xvii – 276. ISBN 978-1-58983-738-6. Paperback, \$35.95.

- [1] Sometimes it is difficult to start writing a review. Sometimes it is the book that causes trouble, e.g., either the book is not what the reviewer expected it to be like or the reviewer is left with an impression of ambivalence or a feeling of undecidedness about what exactly to tell the readers. The latter, is how it feels to me after having read the introduction and contributions to this collection of essays edited by Eric F. Mason and Troy W. Martin.
- [2] In general, almost every publication about 1-2Peter and Jude is welcomed – *almost* is used due to some of the many small commentaries in English that are more or less paraphrases of what the epistles and tradition tell, depictions of what the commentator personally thinks about the text, and very brief summaries of what other commentators (sharing one’s own Christian denomination) have said; such little books are often meant as tools for preaching or written for non-specialists and do not qualify as academic publications.
- [3] But this caveat – *almost* – does not refer to the book under review, which is intended for students and is about three “outliers in the New Testament canon by biblical scholars” (1) as the editors write in their introduction (1-10). Thus, it should not be part of the bulk of light-weight commentaries mentioned above and, certainly, it is not.
- [4] Nonetheless, the editors describe the aim of this collection as follows (2): “Our goal is that the present volume will also contribute to greater interest in and application for 1-2Peter and Jude.” Being addressed to students, the contributors to this book are claimed to provide (2) “a scholarly investigation of key aspects” and, at the same time (3), “[have] the needs and concerns of student readers at the forefront.” Whether or not such a balancing act between two worlds has been achieved effectively is one of the crucial points when it comes to evaluating the worth of this volume.
- [5] The book comes with acknowledgements, a list of abbreviations, a general bibliography, a list of contributors, and indices of ancient sources and modern authors. In their introductory essay Mason and Martin point out that 2 Peter and Jude are still neglected, highlight the merits of a handful of influential researchers, and supply the usual brief summaries of the contributions in this book. In addition, they justify the layout of the volume: (1) there are studies that cover aspects relevant to all three epistles, (2) others about 1Peter, and (3) others dealing with 2Peter *and* Jude (there is only one article about 2Peter alone and none dedicated to Jude). Of course, the reasons the editors give for taking 2Peter and Jude together are plausible (3-4; for instance, tradition, attribution of common authorship, and overlap). Disappointment, however, results from the fact that (1) consists of four contributions, (2) of six, and (3) of only three. It is sad that, as a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy, the editors’ initial complaint about scholarly negligence of 2Peter and Jude is, to a certain extent, represented by the layout of the book itself, i.e., these two texts do not receive equal attention as 1 Peter does and, consequently, are neglected again. Be that as it may, this is not the only problem the book causes.
- [6] In the first contribution, Lewis R. Donelsen writes about authorship and pseudonymity in the three Catholic epistles (“Gathering Apostolic Voices: Who

Wrote 1 and 2 Peter and Jude?,” 11-26). Of course, this is a “tricky” task (cf. the editors’ introduction, 4). The article reads well and is a nice piece as an overview of research positions. Problematic, however, is that the discussion of complex issues often remains on the surface, is not complete (e.g., the genre of 2Peter), and leaves the readers undecided. Even if this book is meant for students, should not students be confronted with more than that? Should students just be introduced to these three texts in order to motivate them to further and intensive study? Or should they not be urged to have a position of their own on certain issues (authorship, date, genre, relations to other texts etc.)?

- [7] Donelsen is not to blame for methodical questions and problems present in most (but not all) contributions in this volume. It is the volume itself that leaves a shallow impression on the informed reader: (1) Many of the contributors heavily rely on commentaries and studies in English and do not utilize international scholarship (e.g., the commentaries on 2Peter and Jude by Henning Paulsen and Anton Vögtle are missing, not to speak of literature in French; research in Scandinavian countries is only represented by Todd Fornberg and Anders Gerdmar). (2) Biblical texts are given in English translations only, something that makes it impossible for qualified students to check conclusions in the individual study directly on the basis of the Greek and without shuffling through a critical edition of the New Testament. (3) Philological and text-critical issues are only vaguely addressed if at all.
- [8] Jeremy L. Hultin deals with “The Literary Relationship among 1 Peter, 2 Peter, and Jude” (27-45) and the first sentence basically says it all about the readership addressed: “Someone encountering the New Testament for the first time would expect to find greater affinity between 1 and 2 Peter than between 2 Peter and Jude.” It might be disputable if that really is what a greenhorn in reading the New Testament may expect; however, Hultin compares (the English texts of) Jude and 2Peter and reports about the positions on their relationship and the scholars propagating these. He tackles only briefly the issue of thematic connections between 1 and 2Peter (two and a half pages).
- [9] Duane F. Watson studies the rhetorics of the three letters in his “The Epistolary Rhetoric of 1Peter, 2Peter, and Jude” (47-62), something he has done several times before with varying thematic focuses. His contribution is sound and informative; nevertheless, his previous publications on rhetorics in Jude and 2Peter are certainly more poignant, concise, and aware of the problems (cf. his *Invention, Arrangement, and Style: Rhetorical Criticism of Jude and 2 Peter*, SBLDS 104; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988; also listed in the bibliography of the book).
- [10] Kelley Coblenz Bautch focuses on apocalypticism (“Awaiting New Heavens and a New Earth’: The Apocalyptic Imagination of 1-2 Peter and Jude”, 63-82) and calls attention to specific motives and key terms in these three letters. When writing on the unseen world, dualism, and end times and the primeval era, she draws from her own studies in that field to provide a well-written overview with decisive bibliographical references for further investigation.
- [11] Steven J. Kraftchick dedicates his article to the christology of 1 Peter (“Reborn to a Living Hope: A Christology of 1 Peter”, 83-98). This short report offers plentiful references to monographs and studies that deal with christology in detail or engage in deeper interaction with the christology of 1 Peter – more than can be dealt with in fifteen and a half pages. Similarly, Troy W. Martin deals with “Christians as Babies: Metaphorical Reality in 1 Peter” (99-112). Readers

might ask themselves if the title is not a contradiction in itself. How can metaphors be real or, in other words, how can these two terms be connected like that. Troy tries to solve that riddle in his conclusions by indicating that in modern literature (112) “metaphor is a way of thinking about and expressing reality.” But why should that be true or, at least, superior to the earlier and alternative view that metaphors are to be understood (112) “as figurative in contrast to literal or real language”? Maybe a closer investigation into Aristotle's classic treatment of metaphors and similes would have been a more appropriate starting point to check what 1 Peter has to offer. Nancy Pardee (“Be Holy, For I am Holy: Paraenesis in 1 Peter”, 113-134) continues that sequence of studies of 1 Peter: her readers are rewarded by a (brief) introduction into the meaning and idea of paraenesis before she exemplifies that in 1 Peter (and provides the key terms in Greek). Probably, she is right in pointing to specific features of 1 Peter (the virtuous life, catalogues of virtues and vices, and household codes) which she takes as clues for “Greek paraenesis, both in content and form” (120). Then, David G. Horrell focuses on “Ethnicity, Empire, and Early Christian Identity: Social-Scientific Perspectives on 1 Peter” (135-149), an article that consists of three case studies: on ethnicity and identity (1 Peter 2:9), the wider world 1 Peter is set into, and claiming the label Christian (4:16). Félix H. Cortez offers insights into “1 Peter and Postmodern Criticism” (151-166), i.e., into deconstructionism, objectivity, narratology, to mention only the most prominent terms. Whether or not readers regard postmodernism as a currently influential force of criticism will decide on the benefit they take from this contribution.

- [12] A rather traditional and well-structured study follows thereafter with Andreas Merkt’s “1 Peter in Patristic Literature” (167-179). He supplies his readership with a survey (as he himself calls it on p. 169) and whets the appetite for further insights into the world of early Christian writers and what they had to say about 1 Peter. Space, however, did not allow Merkt to provide more.
- [13] Similar in structure and approach is Eric F. Mason’s “Biblical and Nonbiblical Traditions in Jude and 2 Peter: Sources, Usage, and the Question of Canon” (181-200). Mason relates numerous texts to Jude and then to 2Peter, offers links, and – briefly – presents his reflections on how the sources were used in both texts.
- [14] Peter H. Davids searches for an answer to the question “Are the Others Too Other? The Issue of ‘Others’ in Jude and 2 Peter” (201-213) and, eventually, says “Yes, they are”. He identifies Stoic and Neoplatonic ideas (but not Epicurean ones).
- [15] After these three victims of space limit, as I dare to call them, Wolfgang Grünstäudl and Tobias Nicklas try to trace early commentary and use of Jude and depict the hard path of 2Peter into the canon (“Searching for Evidence: History of Reception of the Epistles of Jude and 2 Peter”, 215-228). Although, they conclude what might have been expected or known before (the “neglect [of Jude and 2Peter in research] is surely more or less in line with their difficult journey into the canon” [227]), their treatment is sound and indicates that with some more pages granted they could have provided far more information in their high-quality approach.
- [16] This volume contains some rewarding studies. However, they would have been more rewarding if there had been more space available to the authors. Should not such studies include high quality information *and* demanding issues that urge and sometimes even force readers to take a position? Unfortunately there are

also shallow contributions that skate across the surface and are more or less retellings of what others wrote. It might be regarded as a waste of the skills of qualified scholars to have superficial treatments of the complex matters 1Peter, 2Peter, and Jude certainly have to offer.

- [17] All in all, this reviewer is left rather disappointed by the volume itself, especially by its intentions and purposes on the one hand and what is finally found in the volume on the other. Unfortunately, this volume will not serve to raise interest in 2Peter and Jude as these appear to be addressed rather marginally. Thus, the goal of the collection itself has not been reached, no matter how effectively some of the contributions meet their mark.

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