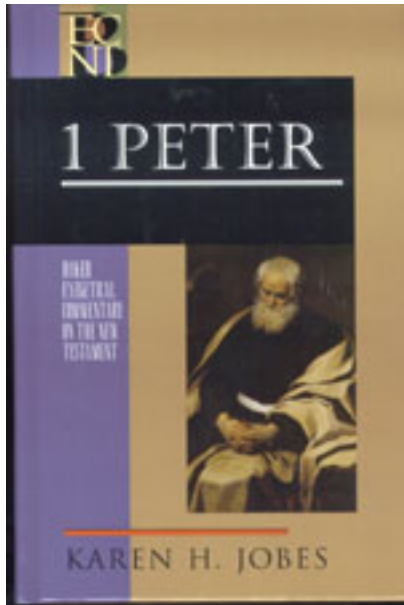


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Jobes, Karen H.

1 Peter

Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

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The author, professor of New Testament at Wheaton College, offers a concise commentary on 1 Peter that is eminently suited for the series in which it appears. The series' aim is to provide readers with "the latest scholarly research ... in the context of a conservative theological tradition" and targets an audience of both scholars and general readers, especially those "involved in the preaching and exposition of the Scriptures" (ix). As a competent guide to the content and message of 1 Peter, the commentary is sure to win a wide circle of readers.

Jobes, who has published only one article on 1 Peter prior to this commentary, relies extensively on the secondary (especially English-language) literature, reporting agreements and disagreements fairly and accurately and ably evaluating the strengths of alternate interpretations. At the same time, she sees her work making three distinctive contributions to 1 Peter scholarship (xi). These include (1) a new suggestion concerning the identity of the addressees (more on this below); (2) attention to the role that *context* plays in passages of the LXX selected for citation—in actuality more a development of observations made by others than an innovation; and (3) a new means for assessing the quality of the Greek of 1 Peter. Examining the syntax of 1 Peter in the light of fourteen criteria for measuring "bilingual interferences," specifically Semitic influence on Greek

composition (appendix [325–38]), Jobs shows with statistical evidence that “the extent of Semitic interference in the Greek of 1 Peter indicates an author whose first language was not Greek” (337). She uses this conclusion to bolster the case of possible authorship by the apostle Peter. Not all will concur with this move, but her providing this objective means of assessing key aspects of the letter’s literary quality is certainly to be welcomed.

The volume’s opening introduction (1–57) covers the standard isagogical issues: the letter’s significance, date, authorship, destination and addressees, major themes and theology, literary genre and unity, and outline. Joining the current consensus, Jobs sees 1 Peter as a genuine, integral letter (not a composite writing or baptismal homily or liturgy or group of hymns set into an epistolary framework. It consists of three major sections (1:3–2:10; 2:11–4:11; 4:12–5:11) framed by a prescript (1:1–12) and postscript (5:12–14). She recognizes that *parepidēmoi* and *paroikoi* (1:1, 2:11; cf. 17) identify the addressees as actual “foreigners” and “resident aliens.” Her speculation, however, that they may also have been adherents of the Judean messianic movement in Rome who were then among those expelled from Rome by emperor Claudius (41–54 C.E.) in the 40s and deported to Asia Minor as colonists (23–41, 61, 85, 267) is an interesting conjecture but devoid of confirming evidence. Neither of the terms, moreover, means “exiles” or “deportees,” and exiles are a quite different kettle of political fish from colonists. She further supposes that the apostle Peter could also have been in Rome in the 40s (34–35) and, having known the deportees, wrote them this letter in the early 50s when he learned of the hostility they were experiencing. Dismissing the body of evidence pointing to a date of composition after the apostle’s death (ca. 65–67 C.E.) and concluding from an analysis of the letter’s syntax that its literary quality is “consistent with a Semitic speaking author for whom Greek was a second language” (xi, 325–38), she allows for a date of the letter in the early 50s and a direct composition by the apostle himself. Here Jobs weaves a web spun of threads of conjecture and supposition with little if any historical evidence connecting the dots. By contrast, the work shifts to solid ground when it lays out the purpose of the letter—encouragement of believers, who are suffering unjustly from verbal abuse and slanderous reproach as evildoers, to resist evil and stand fast in God’s true grace (5:12)—and when it sketches the letter’s theology and seven major themes (42–44, 44–53, respectively). Although Jobs sees 1 Peter portraying the believing community on the whole as an “alternate society” (214 and *passim*) called to holiness and resistance, she also is lured to the contrary theory that takes portions of the letter (especially 2:18–3:7) as urging accommodation to the values of the macrosociety (see esp. 180–209). This hernial stance is bound to present confusion for the readers.

The commentary proper has an unusually attractive, reader-friendly format: an introduction to each major section is followed by an introduction to each subsection, the author’s translation, and then a verse-by-verse analysis of individual units, most

concluding with a final summary. Headings at the top of each page keep the reader oriented as to literary location and theme of the unit. Jobs writes clearly and concisely. She is especially deft at reporting and evaluating scholarly opinion. Among those she cites repeatedly and approvingly are Calvin, Hort, Selwyn, Michaels, Grudem, Goppelt, Achtemeier, Thurén, and Elliott. Minimal attention is given to tradition and redaction, form-critical, or rhetorical issues. When commenting on the use of tradition in 1 Peter, she follows R. Gundry in suspecting that much of it originates in the teaching of Jesus (86, 93, 146, etc.). On the other hand, grammatical and syntactical problems—so abundant in 1 Peter—are ably unpacked and solutions competently weighed. Touching on historical and social issues only occasionally in the commentary proper, she gives most attention to the letter's flow of thought and its theological message.

Her translation adheres closely to the original Greek, although there are a few rather infelicitous renditions. Some are anachronistic for the ancient world: “race” (2:9, where “stock” for *genos* is preferable); “nation” (2:9, where “people” for *ethnos* is preferable); “institution” (2:13, where “creature” for *ktisis* is preferable). Other terms have different problems. *Hierateuma* (2:5, 9) is not an abstract concept of “priesthood” but a concrete and collective “priestly community.” The rendition “royal priesthood” (2:9) disregards the convincing evidence favoring taking *basileion* and *hierateuma* as separate substantives: “royal house,” “priestly community.” “Amaranth” (5:4) as the modifier of “crown of glory” will say little to nonbotanists and modern readers; why not “unfading”? *Agathopoieô* has the same meaning in 2:15 that it does elsewhere in the letter (2:20; 3:6, 17), namely “do what is right,” not “undertake good works” as benefactors (175), and so says nothing about the economic level of the audience (*pace* Winters, whom Jobs cites here). “Submit” for *hypotassô* (2:13, 18; 3:1, 5, 22) is less capable of communicating the concern for social order (*taxis*) behind this Greek verb than the preferable “subordinate.” *Syneidêsis* is aptly rendered “consciousness” (of God) at 2:19 but less felicitously, “conscience” at 3:16 and 3:21.

I welcome especially her exposition of the complex passage 3:18–22, which follows Elliott 2000, 637–710 quite closely. This includes seeing the influence of the Enoch-Noah-flood tradition on these verses, the “disobedient spirits” as the rebellious spirits of primordial time to whom Christ upon his ascension into heaven announced their continued condemnation, rejection of the *descensus* theory, a comparison of the *saving* of Noah and family with the *saving* effected by baptism, and a distinction of the terms and focuses of 3:19 and 4:6. Her demonstration of the echoes of Ps 33/34 throughout the letter (220–23) illustrates the quality of her helpful comments on the letter's use of the LXX in general.

Of the issues or comments calling for more discussion I mention only the following. At 2:5 and 4:17 Jobs translates *oikos* as “house” but understands this as “temple” and so

overlooks the central role *oikos* plays in 1 Peter as a contrast to *paroikoi* and as core symbol of the believing community as “household/family of God.” In her exposition of 2:4–10 she overlooked the most extensive analysis of this text to date, namely, J. H. Elliott, *The Elect and the Holy* (1966). Although she notes the role of doxology in 1:3–12, she fails to stress, say, at 2:12 or 4:16, how glorification of God is presented in 1 Peter as the ultimate goal of Christian living. In her sensitive comments on 3:1–7 she fails to direct attention to what has been called the “evangelical breakthrough” represented by the unique designation of believing husbands and wives as “co-heirs of the grace of life.” The notion that unbelieving women may be meant here in 3:7 (207–8) is hardly likely. Given the importance of, and heated debates over, 4:12–19 and the abundant information it provides on both the social situation and rhetorical strategy of the letter, its treatment (285–97) speaks too much of judgment (290–95) to allow adequate comment on other issues. Given how rare and yet telling the term *Christianos* (4:16) is as a pejorative label for the followers of Jesus Christ in the New Testament, it is remarkable that Jobes says so little about it. The term *adelphotês* also gets short shrift, though its double appearance in 1 Peter (2:17; 5:9) is unique in the New Testament and though it forms a key communal designation related to the core symbol of household/family of God. The commentary of C. Bigg on 1 Peter was published in 1902 and only *reprinted* in “1956” (340)

Finally, as a commentary in the best evangelical tradition, the volume falls a bit short in clarifying the Petrine good news and the evangelical thrust of such passages as 1:12 (addressees as privileged targets of the good news by which they were brought to faith) or allusions to this oral evangelical proclamation in 1:23–25; 2:3 and its “for-you-ness” character (1:12, 20; 3:18, etc.). A comprehensive statement on 1 Peter’s good news as it addresses his readers’ precarious situation would have been welcome, as would a summarizing statement about the recommended response to unjust suffering, issues surely of relevance to modern readers as well. But perhaps this is asking for another volume. What is presented is more than enough to entice readers into a sustained wrestling with this text and its evangelical spirit.

With many references to today’s believers: (89, 165, 262, 267, 279, 286, 295–95; esp. 209–12 on 3:1–7, etc.), Jobes compares and contrasts our modern situation to that of ancient time and reflects on the continuing relevance of 1 Peter. She does not dodge or sugarcoat the tough theological issues present here but seeks their resolution in a manner that is faithful to the intent and thrust of the letter. I do not agree with all her conclusions, but as an evangelical catholic of the Lutheran persuasion I welcome her holding up 1 Peter, its content and evangelical agenda rather than conservative tradition or ecclesiastical dogma, as the ultimate arbiter of meaning. Students, pastors, general readers and scholars will all be well-served by this learned guide to the letter’s treasures.