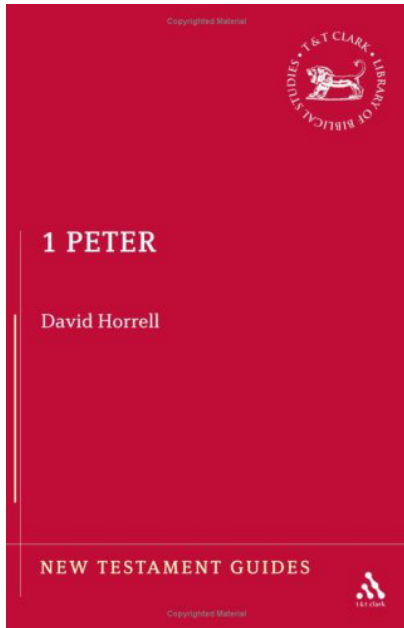


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**Horrell, David G.**

***1 Peter***

New Testament Guides

New York: T&T Clark, 2008. Pp. vii + 126. Paper.  
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In this work Prof. David G. Horrell sets himself the task of introducing the reader to the scholarly study of 1 Peter. It is indeed, as the series title indicates, a guide to this New Testament book. As such it is far fuller (116 pages of text) than what one would find in even a large New Testament introduction or survey text and yet more inclusive (in terms of point of view) and not as exhaustive as a commentary. It is a book that one could give to a class that was about to study 1 Peter in order to orient them to the various issues involved.

After the introduction, the text is divided into six chapters. Each chapter consists of a discussion of the various issues involved in the chapter topic, divided by headings and yet constructed so that one topic naturally flows into the next. The chapter concludes with a two- or three-page "Further Reading" section that is more an annotated bibliography than anything else, for the works are usefully grouped (roughly one to five works in each group) with a paragraph or so of discussion introducing the contribution of each group of works.

The first and longest chapter, “What Kind of Text is 1 Peter?” seeks to provide the answers to the genre, authorship, date, and provenance questions. Horrell carefully looks at each answer (both historically and in contemporary literature) to the various questions and lays out the strengths and weaknesses without strongly arguing for a single position, although he does not hide his own leanings. In this sense the work is more inclusive than a commentary, which often strongly advocates the author’s position.

“Traditions in 1 Peter” forms the second chapter, in which Horrell examines in some detail intertextual issues, such as showing that 1 Peter probably knows some Pauline letters and yet is an independent thinker without any clear allusion to any given Pauline letter.

The third chapter, “The Situation, Identity and Suffering of the Addressees of 1 Peter,” discusses not only the issue of Jewish or Gentile addressees but also John Elliott’s thesis about what “aliens and sojourners” means, and so of necessity discusses the nature of persecution of Christians in the late first century. Again this reviewer was pleased by the clarity and balance and found it unfortunate that, while Horrell could cite some of Reinhard Feldmeier’s work, this book came out just a bit too early to include the recent English translation of Feldmeier’s 1 Peter commentary, which speaks extensively to this issue.

“Jewish scriptures and Christian Identity” forms a fascinating fourth chapter. Here is where 1 Peter’s methodology in using the Jewish Scriptures gets discussed and in particular how they are used christologically.

The fifth chapter, the second longest, “Becoming Christian in a Hostile World,” starts with the debate between Balch and Elliott about how conformist 1 Peter is and continues with an examination of the texts in 1 Peter and a discussion of both the latest sociological study and postcolonial criticism of the letter. It forms especially fascinating reading in that Horrell cites his own published essay on the topic, which means that he has focused more on it than on some of the other topics.

The final chapter, “Assessing 1 Peter: An Ambivalent Legacy?” looks at the significant theological contribution of 1 Peter and then continues to discuss the issues that 1 Peter raises about the relationship of Christianity to Judaism (Is 1 Peter in the way that it appropriates Jewish symbols and identity appropriately considered anti-Semitic in a post-Holocaust world ?) and about the relationship of women to men (i.e., feminist readings and criticism). For Horrell, how the Bible in general and this work in particular is used is the critical issue, for there are certainly ambiguities about it in the history of interpretation.

When it comes to evaluating this work, this reviewer views it as an excellent example of what the genre “guide” or “introduction” can and should be. The work is not exhaustive nor could it be. For instance, when it comes to the discussion of 1 Pet 3:1–6, there are several significant journal articles that are not cited, as well as at least one article in an essay collection. It is particularly such shorter works buried in collections and journals that are not focused on 1 Peter that are missing (although not entirely, for there are some of these that are included). On the other hand, several collections of essays entirely about 1 Peter are cited. But then this is a guide to 1 Peter, not an exhaustive commentary on it, and it would be wrongheaded to criticize a work for not being what it does not pretend to be. Furthermore, the work is broad in its temporal scope, with everything from patristic sources to postcolonial criticism being cited. It cites works published up through 2007, which, given that this book was published in the first half of 2008 means that it is as up-to-date as could possibly be hoped for. Furthermore, the work is broad in its ideological scope, for a wide spectrum of opinion from the left to the right is included and fairly and judiciously evaluated. Nor are all of the sources referred to biblical studies works, for theologians, sociologists, and more all have their say. This reviewer believes that virtually any contemporary scholar of 1 Peter would feel that his or her position has been fairly represented, although one would also recognize that its weaknesses as well as its strengths have been pointed out, often through using the critiques leveled against it by another scholar. So feminist critics and evangelicals, sociorhetorical readings and liturgical theories, and many more all have their say and appear to be treated seriously and fairly. Finally, Horrell discusses all of this with balance. It is not that he obscures his own positions but rather that he does not push them. There is what appears to be a studied fairness to the spectrum of thought along with a careful discussion of the relevant data and then, when appropriate, his gentle statement of his own leanings on the matter (and often they are leanings rather than firm conclusions, for he is fully aware of the ambiguity of some of the data). This is a civil discussion, one in which people could disagree and still walk away as friends.

This work would indeed be helpful in orienting a scholar to what is going on in 1 Peter scholarship or introducing a class to the work they are about to study. But it would also be a helpful orientation to said class about how to carry on scholarly discussion: listen to all sides, examine the data, decide whether or not there is enough data to come to a clear conclusion, make one’s decision, and state one’s conclusions clearly and also with civility so that one does not close oneself off from learning from contrary opinions. Thus it could serve as a model for those who are not that interested in 1 Peter but are instead interested in the methodology of biblical scholarship.