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## *Nova et Vetera: Revisiting The New Testament World (Part II)*<sup>1</sup>

### *The Acts of the Apostles (I):*

Of all the NT documents except for the letters considered to be genuinely from Paul, Acts can be most easily dated prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. There is no mention of James the Just's execution in 62, of Nero's persecution of Roman Christians in 64, or of the deaths of Peter and Paul c. 67. Yet NT scholars have been notoriously reluctant – with a few exceptions – to date it before 70.

The reason is clear: Acts is not only the second half of a two part work (with the Gospel of Luke), it is inextricably tied to the Synoptic puzzle. If Luke is coeval with Acts, and both are anterior to the Jewish War, and the widely-popular “two-document” theory of synoptic relationships is accepted, then Mark must be earlier than Luke/Acts, which in turn must be roughly contemporary with Matthew.

Brown's *INT* was published only a year before the appearance of Joseph Fitzmyer's (1998) long-awaited commentary on Acts. Fitzmyer, whose commentary on Luke in two volumes (1981; 1985) met with great critical acclaim, was asked to contribute a matching commentary on Acts immediately afterwards. But he'd already begun work on Romans for ABRL; Acts was postponed until its completion (Fitzmyer, 1993).

Though it supersedes Johannes Munck's commentary on Acts for the same Anchor Bible series (Munck, 1967), the joy attendant upon the publication of Fitzmyer's Acts is tempered by the author's own admission (Preface xii) that constraints imposed by Doubleday, Inc. limited him to a single volume instead of the intended two.

That is doubly unfortunate, since Acts is second only to Luke in length and remains the only connected narrative of the earliest decades of the Christian movement. Nevertheless Fitzmyer's Acts is a formidable accomplishment, and should take a prominent place in bibliographies not only of Acts but of all NT studies in general.

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<sup>1</sup> Continued from *IBS* 21 June 1999, 119-150

How well it can be utilized is best exemplified by turning to the very first of the “Issue and Problems” on Acts that Brown’s *INT* brings into focus: “Acts has a textual problem more acute than that of any other NT book” (p. 327). The problem is well-known: the Western text of Acts is 10% longer than the Eastern/Alexandrian tradition.

Brown reviews the major attempts to resolve that difference: the Western text includes glosses and copyists’ additions to the original, Eastern version; the Eastern text represents a shortened, more polished version of the original, Western text; neither is the original version – each revises a now lost, pre-existing edition.

Sound familiar? There are echoes here of the unresolved issue regarding Markan priority among the Synoptic Gospels: “Whatever the solution,” Brown concludes, “most commentaries [on Acts] are based on the shorter, Eastern text” (pp. 327-8). Let us turn to Fitzmyer for the latest thoughts on this.

In his seven-page discussion of the “Text of Acts” (Fitzmyer, 1998, pp. 66-72), he ranges in detail through the same general problems noted by Brown, but includes some comments on a third or Byzantine textual tradition which is a haphazard “harmonization” of the main two. Here is his summary:

*The translation in this commentary ... basically follows the Alexandrian text-tradition. I do not consider the Western Text to be the original text-form of Acts, or even an important contender representing that form, but its differences ... will be translated and given after the main translation of each episode. Readings in the Byzantine...text-tradition, when considered of some importance, will be mentioned in the Notes (Fitzmyer, 1998, p. 72).*

There is no discussion in Brown’s *INT*, or in Fitzmyer, about something long ago noted by Adolf Harnack. That concerns the total absence of Titus from Acts, or as Harnack observed: “Acts makes no mention of so important a companion of St. Paul as Titus, and yet it mentions Aristarchus, [not once but] twice” (Harnack, 1911, p. 12, note 1).

Titus, of course, is not only mentioned in the correspondence of Paul deemed genuine, but is the recipient of the pastoral letter addressed to him in which he is described (Titus 1:4) as a Pauline convert to Christianity. His omission from Acts, and the inclusion of Aristarchus, may be due to which of the two knew Luke in person.

It is not only persons but places as well which are notable as being prominent, only mentioned in passing, or completely absent in various NT sources. Antioch-on-the-Orontes is just such a locality.

### ***The Antioch of Acts and the Pauline Epistles\****

Certainly Syrian Antioch played a key role in the development of early Christianity, and Brown devotes an appropriate amount of his attention to that city. Only Jerusalem and Damascus appear to have earlier Christian communities (that we know of) than Antioch, and Acts 11:26 asserts that the term *Christianoi* was coined there.

Antioch throughout the first century seems to have fostered a schizophrenic attitude to early Christianity, with two distinctly, perhaps antagonistic, traditions: the Jewish-Christians who looked to the conservative leadership of Peter and James at Jerusalem, and the Gentile Christians, who looked to the more liberal leadership of the dispersed Hellenists (of Acts 8:5; 11:19) and Paul.

Glanville Downey is negligent in his treatment of Christianity at Antioch in the generation between A.D. 70-100. Precisely where he might have addressed one of that period's most difficult issues – which portions of the NT may have originated in Antioch – he chose instead to sidestep the matter completely (Downey [1961] p. 288 note 67) by failing to investigate the last third of the first century.

Thus students of the NT should not be surprised if Antioch is still at the center of modern controversy about which Gospel (Luke or Matthew) more accurately reflects the Antiochene church late in the first century. Certainly no one has labored more intensely than J.P. Meier to make a case for Matthew (Brown & Meier [1983] pp. 45-72), but in spite of that effort he has not displaced Luke.

Perhaps it would be wiser to abandon the either/or attitude to the issue, i.e. the “one community, one gospel” argument. It may be that both Luke and

Matthew are to be associated with Antioch, each with what my former mentor Burton Thurston used to call a “variety” of Christianity, neither of which displaced the other until second-century developments saw the demise of Jewish Christian influence.

To advocate that position need not mean that either gospel is originally *from* Antioch, i.e. generated by a community in the city. Robinson (1976, pp. 86-117, esp. pp. 103-107), in my opinion, has made a good case for Jerusalem as the formative community of at least the earliest version of Matthew, and that only after the dispersal of the Jewish Christians c. 66 was canonical Matthew completed in Antioch.

Acts will always be a precious and unique document, one which the Greek historian A.R. Burn enthusiastically recommended (along with the correspondence of Pliny the Younger) as a primary source “for daily life in the Greek-speaking world under the [Early Roman] Empire” (Burn, 1981, p. 400).

But it must be used with caution. Worth remembering is that Paul and Josephus, but not Acts, identify James the Just as “the Lord’s brother.” Is that no more than an oversight on Luke’s part? Or is it a deliberate omission, by a Gentile Christian author at Antioch, to diminish the status of the Jewish Christian church at Jerusalem?

Likewise it is the Byzantine historian John Malalas in the 6th century, and not Luke in the 1st, who knows the street name (*Singon* or *Siagon*) near the Pantheon at Antioch where early church members congregated and preached (see Downey, 1961, p. 275 n.15).

Malalas was indisputably a native Antiochene, i.e. of a Syrian Semitic background, and therefor his testimony – though late – should be taken seriously. The Pantheon remains to be located – perhaps new excavations at the site will reveal some material evidence of it.

Luke alone (Acts 9:11) names “The Street Called Straight” in Damascus where the stricken Paul was taken during his conversion. It seems odd that Luke is so knowledgeable about the topography of Damascus, yet demonstrates no comparable familiarity with Antioch.

Should we then discard Joseph Fitzmyer’s seemingly persuasive arguments for Luke’s origins as a Semitic-speaking native of Syrian

Antioch (Fitzmyer, 1981, pp. 41-47; 1998, p. 51)? Or would it be better to simply reserve judgment in the absence of enough relevant evidence?

More than that, it may be time to admit that Acts simply does not tell us much about Antioch and that the city's claim to prominence in the early days of the church is over-emphasized. Neither Peter nor Paul had any long or lasting association with Antioch.

That may explain the singular absence of churches dedicated to either apostle during six centuries of the city's Christian period. Even the tradition that Christians were first identified as such in Antioch rests entirely on the testimony of Acts 11:26, a statement with absolutely no support from other sources.

Antioch remains within the NT a place to which we are taken on occasion, and from which we depart again and again. It is never – in Acts or the Pauline epistles – a place we really visit, much less a place in which we reside. Like the Mecca of earliest Islam, Antioch is given a far more prominent role (retrospectively) in the evolution of a new faith than the sources actually allow.

### ***The Acts of the Apostles (II):***

One of the key Greek terms in the NT is *koinônia*, which Brown correctly translates as “fellowship,” “communion” or “community” – depending upon the context. It became, for early Christians, a less ambiguous designation for themselves than *pistis* (“the faith” - Acts 6:7) and *hodos* (“the way” - Acts 24:14; 24:22 *inter alia*).

*Koinônia* was certainly less complicated than the phrase *hoi apo tês ekklêsias* (“those of the church” – Acts 12.1), or even some shorter designations such as *hoi pisteuontes* (“those believing” – Acts 2:44, 4:32 *inter alia*) or the shorter phrase *hoi pistoi* (“the believers” – Acts 10:45).

There were as well other terms of equal ambiguity relating to Jesus as other than *christos* or *kyrios*. Within just a few verses of each other are two: *onoma* (“the name” – Acts 5:42) and *logos* (“the word” – Acts 6:4). Reading Acts gives one the feeling that Luke was careful to use as many synonyms as possible to avoid repetition.

Some of the above designations, and some not noted there, are in the list and discussion offered long ago by Henry J. Cadbury in his essay “Names for Christians and Christianity in Acts” (Cadbury, 1933=1979, pp. 375-392 with p. 375 note #5). His assessment is still apt: “Even in the Book of Acts we find no final or hardened terminology, but an informality and variety of expression which is natural to the formative stages [of a new religion]” (*ibid*, p. 376).

Brown (p. 287) links both *koinônia* and *hodos* with Hebrew *yahad* (“oneness,” “unity”), a term known from the Dead Sea Scrolls. There it has specific reference to the group (Essenes? Qumranites?) who produced the DSS literature and followed a strictly structured way of life. That is not the only point of reference.

Very recently a debate was generated by a badly-damaged Hebrew inscription from Qumran in which the term *yahad* (“community”) might or might not be read in a way that would link the DSS to that site. That debate has been aired in the pages of *BAR*, with Frank M. Cross and Esther Eshel (1998) arguing *for* reading *yahad*, and Ada Yardeni (1998) arguing *against*. The issue is best assessed as *non liquet*.

Brown might also have added that other DSS terms, e.g. *rabbim*, as used in the sense of “congregation,” and *mebaqqer* (“overseer” or “guardian”), may be paralleled in Greek by Christian terms such as *ekklêsia* (“assembly” in a narrow sense) and *episkopos* (“overseer”), respectively. On this see Vermes (1976, pp. 19-20).

Also within that discussion there should have been a reference to the term *christianoï* as it was coined at Antioch in Acts 11:26. There and elsewhere in the earliest period it represents an attempt by non-Jews (especially Roman provincial authorities) to identify the followers of Jesus the Christ, not an attempt by Christians to identify themselves (on this see now Fitzmyer, 1998, pp. 478-479).

Thus *christianoï* could be translated “messianists” or perhaps “messiah-ists” in a literal sense, and only attain its proper-noun status when the followers of Jesus of Nazareth became a recognized religion. To be fair to Brown, he does specify (p. 287 note 21) that *ekklêsia* is used to translate Hebrew *qâhâl* (“assembly”) in the LXX; I might add that Luke/Acts is heavily indebted to the Septuagint.

### ***The Pauline Correspondence:***

The *INT* devotes 275 pages to the collection of letters either written by Paul (seven in number in the majority opinion) or which purport to be written by Paul (the remaining six). The fact that so modest a group should demand one third of the volume speaks as much to their importance as it does to Brown's personal and professional interest in them and their author or the person who inspired them.

So large a portion of the book deserves a solid introduction, and that is what Brown offers in three interrelated and interesting essays (pp. 409-421): "Classifications and Format of NT Letters" (which is lacking Metzger [1977b] in its bibliography), "General Issues in Paul's Life and Thought," and lastly "An Appreciation of Paul."

Nine of the Pauline letters are addressed to communities, and four to named individuals. Some appear to be dictated rather than autographed. If we separate out the seven held to be authentically Paul's own composition, and accept that Philemon's inclusion is an accident of piety, five of the remaining epistles are to only four communities and the sixth (Galatians) is addressed to ethnic Celts:

*Paul's letters were real letters, in the sense that they were for the most part written at a particular moment to particular recipients. But they were also very remarkable letters, in that, quite apart from their religious content, they showed a literary quality and stylistic elaboration that (with the possible exception of Philemon and doubtless other short pieces that haven't survived) put them in a different class from the products of routine letter-writing... (Harvey, 1990, p. 339).*

### ***The Genuine Pauline Letters:***

The seven letters considered to be from the hand (or at least from the head/heart) of Paul alone are 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, Philippians, Philemon, 1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans. They vary in length from just over one printed page (Philemon) to about 25 pages (Romans), which is also the length of The Apocalypse (Revelation).



No other correspondence from any other period of human history has been as widely read or studied, or as influential, as the small collection attributed to Paul – what Gunther Zuntz called “the most influential book [sic] written in the Greek language” (as quoted in Bruce, 1980b, p. 213).

Since these letters were intended to be read aloud to a group (letters addressed to individuals are no exception), and afterwards circulated throughout a community, they are really more like modern essays or short treatises on particular topics of concern than like the personal letters so familiar from the ancient rubbish dumps of Egypt. They fall somewhere between letters intended for publication (e.g. Cicero, Pliny the Younger) and purely private correspondence.

None as we have it now is dated; probably none ever was. What Brown nowhere notes is that what correspondence has been preserved may be only *some* of what Paul produced during his 20-25 years (A.D. 40-65?) as an active missionary. Those that are held by most to be genuinely from Paul were all written within a decade or so (50-60). Even within that short a span of time we know of at least one (the “Previous Letter” of I Cor 5:9) that is no longer extant.

It has long been argued by scholars that three of the letters, Philippians, II Corinthians and Romans, are really composites – that is, their present form and length derives from parts of two or more letters that were later combined into one. The evidence against and for that theory is reviewed by Brown in the relevant places, and in the case of Romans a “two-document” theory is given short shrift.

Even if we accept the maximum permutation for each of the ones deemed to be an amalgamation, and posit that there may have been as many as three to the Philippians, seven to the Corinthians and even two to the residents of Rome, the total of genuine Pauline letters becomes fifteen. That averages one each year for the approximately fifteen years (c.50-65) that we know Paul was actively on missionary duty.

If we then consider that twelve of those fifteen were composed with just three communities in mind (Philippi, Corinth and Rome) or that parts of letters to now-unknown places were stitched to others of similar nature or theme, it becomes evident why Brown refers to this whole process of

educated guesswork as “the endless ingenuity of scholarship” (p. 496). There is never a shortage of new theories.

One aspect of the Pauline correspondence, whether “genuine” or “apocryphal,” is its effect on how the individual Christian groups/communities at first preserved the letters and then later used the collection when their liturgies took shape. That topic appears not to have interested Brown, who devotes only six pages of the *INT* to “The Text of the New Testament” (pp. 48-54).

None of Brown’s comments focuses on the predilection of early Christian communities to utilize the codex. The codex or bound-book format replaced the familiar scroll at about the same time that the final books of the NT were in circulation – the late first or early second century. That changeover from scroll to codex may be due to the ease with which the codex lent itself to a collection of Paul’s letters. The author of one excellent recent study puts it this way:

*This coming together of transcriptional need and religious authority in the Pauline letter collection and nowhere else makes it nearly certain that the codex was introduced into Christian usage as the vehicle of a primitive edition of the corpus Paulinum (Gamble [1995] p. 63).*

It was a simple step from collecting Paul’s correspondence in the new codex format to expanding that to include the entire NT and ultimately the great corpus of Christian literature which appeared in the post-Apostolic age and after. The motivation was less piety than it was the ease by which the message might be made accessible:

*Christian texts came to be inscribed in codices not because they enjoyed a special status as aesthetic or cult objects, but because they were practical books for everyday use: the handbook, as it were, of the Christian community (Gamble [1995] p. 66).*

From the handful of letters attributed to Paul or to some of his closest disciples, to the great codices of the fourth century and later (*Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, Bezae*) was no more complicated a process than the changeover from handwritten texts to printed books in fifteenth century Europe. Both “inventions” began with scripture, and both quickly

became the standard method used by secular institutions to communicate their very different messages.

No one will be surprised that Paul's letters continue to lend themselves to examination of their social implications. J.P. Brown (1991) has taken a close look at Paul's understanding of how God's "righteousness" manifests itself in certain humans. That led him to examine Paul's own use of "a sequence of inverted masculine social roles" in the authentic letters (for Brown, there are only five).

### ***The Deutero-Pauline Letters:***

There are six letters generally considered to be "deutero" or "secondary" to the seven genuine Pauline epistles: 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, and three more that are termed "pastoral" or "instructive:" Titus, plus 1 and 2 Timothy. Brown presents each in that order following two short essays, "Pseudonymous Composition in General," and "Problems about Pseudonymity." Both demand attention.

A test of the genuineness of the Pauline correspondence is those letters' presupposition of a Jewish-Christian audience, i.e. recent converts. That's what we would expect of letters with an early date (50s-60s). Any letters (e.g. Ephesians) that are to a Gentile (i.e. Hellenistic-Christian) community might better be dated much later.

One argument against the pseudonymity of the Deutero-Pauline letters (an argument not put forward by Brown) is the small number of them (the scholarly consensus is six). Surely other communities as relatively unimportant as (e.g.) Colossae would have benefitted from an apostolic epistle that would have put them "on the map" of early Christian communities. We should expect "copycat" letters.

Brown does draw attention (pp. 608-609) to what are collectively termed "Household Codes," first in Colossians 3:18-4:1 and in four other documents (Eph 5:21-6:9; Titus 2:1-10; 1 Tim [*passim*] and I Pet 2:13-3:7). These are hardly unique in Mediterranean cultures, ancient or modern, but they deserve more than a glance.

How, when and why these rules of domestic ethics developed is a fascinating topic, and the five passages noted above, plus three others in

extra-canonical sources (Didache 4:9-11; I Clem 1:3 & 21: 6-8; Polycarp's *Philippians* 4:1-6:2) are a rich source for biblical sociologists.

That aspect is succinctly reviewed by Brown, who considers the rules laid out in Colossians as "perhaps the oldest" of that genre. It is to his credit that he sees the danger of reading back into a document our own contemporary values, just as we must be careful to avoid imposing on ourselves ethical regulations no longer relevant.

That in turn raises the larger issue of how we view any of the NT epistles: As Brown put it, "should 20th-century reconstructions of 1st century Jewish thought based on reading ancient documents be preferred to the witness of a perceptive observer such as Paul, who lived as an observant Jew in that century?" (p. 579)

For Brown, 2 Thessalonians is the most problematic of the six deuteropauline letters to dismiss as pseudonymous: "The similarity of format between [1 and 2 Thess] is striking – indeed greater than between any other two genuine letters" (p. 592). Even after he admits that majority opinion today rejects Pauline authorship, "biblical studies are not helped by being certain about the uncertain" (p. 596).

Only slightly less difficult to assess is Colossians, a letter that "is truly majestic, and certainly a worthy representative of the Pauline heritage" (p. 599). A feature of Colossians that commands attention is its "Christological Hymn" (Col 1:15-20), an aspect of several other Pauline or deuteropauline letters (esp. Phil 2:5).

The list of passages deemed early hymns (Christological and/or other) ranges from five, to as many as thirty, passages in ten NT documents (depending upon the criteria employed in identification). On this topic, see Brown's excellent summary, "Hymns in NT Letters" (pp. 489-493 - the full listing is on p. 491) within his commentary on Philippians.

However many hymns we may identify, Brown expresses surprise at the high Christology of that in Colossians: "How, within fifty years (at the latest), did Christians come to believe that about a Galilean preacher who was crucified as a criminal?" (p. 617) Whether that Christology was an expression of Paul's belief is not clear.

Chapter 28 is devoted to Ephesians, which Brown believes is in the same category as Romans “as a candidate for exercising the most influence on Christian thought and spirituality” (p. 620). Apart from the dispute over authorship, there is the possibility (based on the testimony of Marcion) that Laodicea and not Ephesus was the city to which the letter was originally addressed (626 note 15).

Ephesians is a document of quite contradictory nature, perhaps the most semitized of all NT epistles in its imagery if not in its language, and yet it expresses much concern for a universal church, “... a church, therefore, that has a future dimension” (p. 622). That latter aspects argues strongly for a late date (90s). At one point Brown takes issue with those who see DSS influence in Ephesians:

*One should be careful to distinguish between the unprovable claim that the writer of Eph was directly influenced by the Qumran literature or Qumran Essenes and the demonstrable fact that Qumran literature shows us ideas prevalent among 1st-century Jews. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor suggested that Ephesians was written under Paul's direction by a scribe (amanuensis) who was a converted Essene (634 note p. 36).*

That statement is too general and, because of that, misleading in its context. The DSS community's literature did not reflect, nor did it influence, mainstream Jewish religious thinking of the time. That includes the works of Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus (contemporaries of Paul and other NT authors), who were acquainted with Essenic philosophy – if not with individual community members.

The Pastoral Epistles have been a major source of information about what many scholars refer to as Paul's “second career” or the years after his house arrest (and trial, and acquittal?) in Rome in the early 60s. “Second career” is an inaccurate expression – perhaps “extended career” would be better.

At the very least the Pastorals (assuming they are not Pauline but written by disciples who had known him in person) provide some insight about the high regard in which Paul was held by the early Christian communities who produced them: “If Paul has contributed enormously to

making the love of Christ... real to Christians ... in no small way II Tim has contributed to making Paul loved" (p. 675).

***The Rest of the New Testament:***

There is no general introductory essay for the segment of *INT* entitled "The Other New Testament Writings" (pp. 681-813). Though Brown offers no *apologia* for its absence, it becomes evident that the six documents (Hebrews, 1 and 2 Peter, James, Jude and Revelation) have no connective thread or theme as do the two sets of Pauline letters or Gospels/Acts. There is one other "literary unit" we should note.

The three Johannine epistles were included, for reasons given there, in his review of the Gospel of John and associated documents (Chaps 11-14, pp. 333-405). On the authorship of the Gospel and the identity of the community from which the Johannine writings (except The Apocalypse) may have come, see the three brief but insightfully comprehensive essays in *INT* (pp. 368-376). Those are Brown at his best.

One example from the Johannine section will suffice. 3 John is not only the shortest document in the NT, it is "quite unlike I and II John in subject matter" (401). In short, Brown finds that 3 John (in the light of *other* Johannine material) provides evidence about several major crises for early Christianity, external and internal, which had surfaced already by the late 90s.

They were (1) fundamental disagreement, sometimes to the point of hostility, between the Jewish community of any city or region on the issue of the significance of Jesus (see now Hurtado, 1999) and (2) rivalry and intolerance over doctrinal and other issues between and among Christian communities. That summary simplifies what Brown sets out in *INT* (pp. 404-405).

Nothing associated with those problems, apart from Christology (which is particular, by definition, to Christianity) is unusual or unexpected. The first century of Islam's development brought to the surface social, liturgical, dynastic and doctrinal differences that sharply divided the *'umma*, the new religion's believing community. For a review of some of those same issues regarding self-definition between Judaism and early Christianity (including a bibliography), see now Senior (1999, especially p. 23 note #43):

Resistive persecution from an imperial power and its agencies, which was a major factor encouraging cohesion for early Christians, wasn't the case when Islam debuted. In spite of such a centripetal force, Christianity fragmented. As Brown puts it, "If one thinks of struggles and divisions in subsequent Christianity, one can realize how often the pattern has repeated itself, in whole or part" (p. 405).

Hebrews serves as a "bridge" between the three pastorals and the seven catholic (general) epistles, but that is not the reason why Brown devotes a full twenty pages to it. "By all standards this is one of the most impressive works in the NT."

In its language, style, construction and purpose Hebrews shows how it can be at one and same time illuminating in its Christology, and frustratingly obscure "about the author, locale, circumstances, and addressees" (p. 683). For those reasons Brown has reserved a unit he designates "literary genre and structure" (689-691) for a closer look – in large part utilizing the work of A. Vanhoye through 1989.

Brown sets out three reasons why he treats Hebrews and 1 Peter sequentially: (1) Rome was central to each, as recipient of Hebrews and as the origin of 1 Peter; (2) both documents share similarities "to Pauline thought and background," and (3) the Epistle of James, traditionally (and arbitrarily) linking Hebrews and 1 Peter, shows no Roman focus and exhibits disagreements with Paul (p. 705 note #1).

The "letters" of Jude (Judas) and 2 Peter are treated by Brown in sequence (chaps. 35-36), which interestingly parallels how A.E. Harvey (1990) grouped them in a comparative study. Brown's reasons for treating Hebrews and 1 Peter in that order are noted above; his logic for examining Jude and 2 Peter sequentially is his assumption that the latter "draws on Jude" (p. 704 note #1).

Harvey leaves open the issue of interdependence, and looks to an impressive series of particular similarities of "theme" between the two: fallen angels; stock figures or places from the OT; angel doxologies; analogies from the natural world; apostolic authority (Harvey, 1990, pp. 341-342). This is in addition to shared vocabulary and/or similar phraseology, common features of literary siblings:

*What we have here is a pair of writings that are addressed to similar situations, discuss similar topics, use almost the same standard illustrations and employ similar vocabulary and phraseology. But in no case is there a verbatim repetition of a whole phrase or sentence, such as would be required to prove "literary dependency" (Harvey, 1990, p. 342).*

At the very least Harvey's study helps to revitalize interest in the study of Jude, which D.J. Rowston (1974/75) characterized a generation ago as "the most neglected book in the New Testament." Moreover, 2 Peter's literary/cultural models must be sought outside the NT, or as Harvey puts it "Shorn of a few adventitious Christian trimmings, it could pass as a fair specimen of Hellenistic Jewish literature" (Harvey, 1990, p. 351).

That doesn't resolve the contentious issue of the date of Jude or 2 Peter. For Brown the apparent dependence of the latter on the former is one of a half-dozen indications (he calls them "afters") that 2 Peter is later than the rest of the NT by as much as a full generation: "a date of 130, give or take a decade, would best fit the evidence" (p. 767). That issue remains to be resolved.

Brown (p. 741) makes a good argument that The Epistle of James, though perhaps emanating from the Jerusalem Christian community as early as the outbreak of the First Jewish War, is unlikely to have been written by "a villager from Nazareth." At the very least, the person behind the letter, James "the brother of the Lord," is now the object of a revival of scholarly interest (e.g. Ward, 1992).

The Apocalypse/Book of Revelation continues to attract popular as well as critical attention, especially so as the new millennium approaches. For the non-scholarly reader and/or interpreter, Brown offers a corrective to the false notoriety generated by the fringe element worldwide, aided and abetted by a credulous media:

*Revelation is widely popular for the wrong reasons, for a great number of people read it as a guide to how the world will end .... Some of the more militant exponents of Revelation have aggravated law-enforcement authorities to the point of*



*armed intervention (the Branch Davidians in Waco, TX [in 1993]).... Revelation is difficult to understand (p. 773).*

As clarification to misconceptions of what Revelation, as well as other, earlier works of similar type may or may not signify, we are offered Brown's excellent six-page essay "The Literary Genre of Apocalyptic" (pp. 774-780). This should be required reading for anyone hoping to make sense of the Apocalypse of John within its own *Sitz im Leben* (very late first century) or now as the 20th century ends.

But it isn't just that visionary, or eschatological, aspect of this difficult work that commands so much scholarly interest; it is the relationship of the book to the religious life of the community that produced it: "One can say unequivocally that, except for the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Apocalypse is the most liturgical book in the New Testament canon" (Ford, 1998, p. 207).

That may be a bit strong, given the multitude of interpreters' opinions in just the last decade. But Brown also finds significant liturgical material within the structure of Revelation, and is not unaware that the hymnic material extant in that work may have come from earlier versions now lost (see his "The Role of Liturgy," p. 798 with note #57).

Authorship is as much a problem now as it has ever been, with candidates ranging from John the son of Zebedee to the evangelist (and epistolator) John to the Elder John (of Patmos) to an as-yet- unidentified John. More common is the assumption that whoever wrote The Apocalypse has strong Semitic linguistic roots, and that points to a community of Jewish-Christians, perhaps of Palestinian origin.

***Additional Material:***

Two appendices complete the text of the *INT*, one entitled "The Historical Jesus" (pp. 817-830) and the second on the topic "Jewish and Christian Writings Pertinent to the New Testament" (pp. 831-840). Brief comments on each will suffice, followed by some general concluding remarks on the entire volume.

Students may find Brown's thoughts on "The Historical Jesus" more rewarding for two reasons: the topic is lively (partly due to intense media

interest), and it is a final testimonial to Brown as a first rank biblical scholar of the second half of this century.

Part 1 is a quick overview of the two centuries (1780-1980) in which the Enlightenment's scholarly enquiry into the life and times of Jesus has often generated more heat than light. Parts 2 & 3 deal briefly with the maverick "Jesus Seminar" (now in its 15th year of contentious existence) and what Brown terms "Miscellaneous Views."

The Jesus Seminar has succeeded in generating a great deal of controversy and little acceptance outside the ultra-liberal left of secular and religious academe. So far it hasn't spawned any formal counter movement, but several serious scholars, best represented by P.M Head (1995) and L.T. Johnson (Johnson, 1996), have weighed in with deservedly harsh criticism.

As I pointed out several years ago (MacAdam, 1997, pp. 43-44), the writers who generate the publications for the "Jesus-book industry" want, like the Jesus of Mt 21:6-7, to straddle simultaneously *two* donkeys – one of speculative sensationalism and the other of serious scholarship – and hope that we don't notice how ridiculous they look riding into town with expectations of hosannas and palm branches.

If students are looking for additional light on what the field of "Historical Jesus" studies has generated, a good place to begin would be with D.H. Akenson's trenchant and readable essay, "Modern Biblical Scholarship and the Quest for the Historical Yeshua" (see Akenson 1998b). It is permeated with that one essential quality so often lacking in NT literature: a finely-honed sense of humor.

Less imbued with humor but equally enlightening about research on the historical Jesus are several recent essays which review the aim, scope and some of the methods employed. Meier (1996) takes a look at what divides the "questers;" Marsh (1997) identifies nine "interlocking" quests since 1778; and Bond (1999) reviews three of the most recent volumes on the topic of historical Jesus research.

Sometimes that quest can go too far in the attempt to extract "meaning" and "relevance" from bits of textual material that cannot be placed into a logical context. A recent example of this approach is Watson (1999), who argues that the "wandering" pericope of Jesus and the unnamed woman

taken in adultery (often placed at John 7:53) was in origin an episode involving a “remarried divorcée” who would be an adulteress only according to Jesus’ stricture on that “sin.”

Brown’s Appendix II, on Jewish/Christian literature pertinent to the NT, is a ten-page survey of extracanonical writings growing from the OT (the DSS, the Apocrypha, and Josephus), as well as the ever-expanding (as new discoveries are made) library of Christian apocrypha (gospels, epistles and tracts of uncertain value), plus a vast collection of post-Apostolic writings (the Church fathers).

Judging by reference to them, it is the DSS which takes pride of place among the extracanonical OT in Brown’s *INT*. The documents in this large archive have provided fodder for some researchers and ammunition for others. All in all, biblical scholarship hasn’t been well-served by the politicizing, polemical attitude displayed by a large number of learned folk from many denominational backgrounds.

Now that half a century has passed since their discovery, and most of them (at least those of fundamental importance) have been published, it is gratifying that Brown’s assessment is concise and to the point: “Despite claims to the contrary, there is no clear evidence of a Christian influence or component in the Qumran DSS” (p. 832).

Whether the scrolls belonged to a dissident Jewish community long resident at Qumran, or were hidden in caves in close proximity by members of a group resident elsewhere, remains to be determined. The DSS so far known may not be the entire collection, but without what we have the complexity of Judaism during the NT era would not be nearly as well understood as it is at present.

### ***Conclusion:***

In a very real way the development of Christianity during the first three centuries may be characterized by the two supernatural events at either end of that time period. Paul’s vision on the road to Damascus has a meaningful parallel in Constantine’s vision prior to the Battle of the Milvian Bridge (on the latter see Hall, 1998).

But the New Testament covers only about one third of the 300-year period between those two transformative visions. That crucial first century was admirably summarized seventy years ago by Prof. T.R. Glover in a little book characterized by F.F. Bruce (who knew Glover as a lecturer at Cambridge) as “a specially attractive work” (Bruce, 1980, p. 65):

*In the New Testament we have the opening pages of a story familiar to us but yet very insufficiently realized. The story is two-fold; it shows us a new conception of life in an old world, and at the same time a new society within an older and much greater society. In that world, and that society, the books of the New Testament were written (Glover, 1932, p. 1).*

That “new conception of life in an old world” is an echo of an older assertion of *nova et vetera* (Mt 13:52) or even *novum a veteri* (Mk 2:21) – the realization that Jesus of Nazareth represented a new interpretation of the old traditions of Judaism for a community of believers whose written testimony to that faith created the body of literature we call the New Testament.

Raymond E. Brown set himself an enormous task in attempting to elucidate the disparate segments of the New Testament for students. He has succeeded admirably. His *INT* is a comprehensive and coherent account of those 27 documents, and a worthy capstone to his career. May he who labored long in that vineyard enjoy the fruits of those labors in the presence of his Vintager.

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### ***Addendum***

Herewith some typos and corrections I noted: p. 116 note 27: *Coniectanea* should read *Collectanea*; p. 239, line #9 from the bottom, “see” is missing between “shall” and “in; p. 381: the title of Painter’s book is *John: Witness and Theologian*; p. 382 n. 1: “the” should be “that;” p. 457 n. 4:

“Cassiander” should be “Cassander;” p. 604, line 12 from the top: “smae” should be “same;” p. 626 n. 15: put “the” between “that” and “Laodicean;” p. 636 n. 38: place “in” between “Studies” and “Paul’s.”

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\*A review article based on Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York, Doubleday, 1997). Anchor Bible Reference Library. pp. xxxvii + 878 (maps, tables & illustrations). US\$42.50. ISBN 0-385-24767-2. Wherever a quotation or a reference is followed by a page number alone, the reference is to *INT*. All dates are A.D. unless otherwise specified.

*I have used the following abbreviations: ANRW = Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt; BAR = Biblical Archaeology Review; JSNT = Journal for the Study of the New Testament; OGIS = Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae; SEG = Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum; ZPE = Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik.*

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