

1 Peter, Volume 1: Chapters 1–2 and 1 Peter, Volume 2: Chapters 3–5, by Travis B. Williams and David G. Horrell. International Critical Commentary. London: T&T Clark, 2023. 853 pp. + 816 pp. \$198.00.

Travis B. Williams and David G. Horrell have produced an expansive commentary on 1 Peter. Both volumes stretch to just over 1,600 pages, covering 105 verses. The introduction alone exceeds 300 pages. It is one of the most well-researched commentaries on 1 Peter. The bibliography at the end of Volume 2 stretches over 150 pages with over 2,500 entries. Both men have produced an extensive library of academic work focusing on 1 Peter, culminating in this two-volume commentary. The International Critical Commentary intends to “bring together all the relevant aids to exegesis ... to help the reader to understand the meaning” (General Editor’s Preface). Conservative readers will likely enjoy the abundance of material on 1 Peter but often find the authors’ conclusions unsatisfactory. The authors’ primary purpose is to produce academic research rather than aid in sermon preparation, something any potential buyer should keep in mind.

The authors’ approach to the text-critical issues in 1 Peter is a key highlight of the commentary. In the first section of the introduction, they establish the text of 1 Peter by deviating from the traditional understanding of text criticism in light of the recent development of the Coherence Based Genealogical Method (4–5). This departure from the norm, where primary weight would typically be given to the older witnesses, offers readers a new perspective. The more recent edition of the *Editio Critica Maior* reflects the results of the CBGM on the Gospel of John and the Catholic Epistles. The newest edition of the ECM introduced nine variations from the previous edition in 1 Peter. Unlike the commentaries that precede them, Williams and Horrell seek to weigh individual witnesses within the text transmission to consider which readings most closely reflect the *Ausgangstext* (5). Because the CBGM is relatively new, it is difficult to evaluate the long-term benefits and acceptance of the system. Although it shows promise, Williams and Horrell occasionally deviate from its findings (e.g., 1 Pet 5:1).

The authors have allowed their commitment to pseudonymous authorship to influence the dating of the letter. Williams and Horrell ultimately determine that the letter could have been written between A.D. 70 and 95 (115). According to the authors, the “most important” clue as to the dating of the letter is the reference in 5:13 of Rome as “Babylon” (112). They reason that before A.D. 70, there would have been no connection between Rome and Babylon in the minds of Christian readers (113). That said, Babylon was a familiar city in the Old Testament and could have stood in the readers’ minds as a city in moral opposition to God (cf. Schreiner, *1 & 2 Peter and Jude*, 291). This reference fits well if Peter is writing from Rome. Nothing the authors adduce will compel those committed to Petrine authorship to shift the dating of the letter to the 70s instead of the early 60s.

As mentioned, Williams and Horrell believe the letter was written

pseudonymously. The first piece of evidence they cite is the dating of the letter. If Peter died in the mid-60s, it is impossible that he wrote the letter in the early- to mid-70s. Williams and Horrell take time to examine ancient sources and argue that Peter was martyred during the reign of Nero. The second piece of evidence the authors cite for pseudonymous authorship is the syntax of the letter. They claim the Greek in the letter is too polished for a Galilean fisherman to compose. Peter is described as “ἀγράμματοί” in Acts 4:13. However, the reference in Acts 4:13 is specifically about rabbinical training (cf. Miller and Murawski, *1 Peter*, 30–31). Peter did not have formal theological training. While this is possibly the strongest argument against Petrine authorship, it is not without an answer. Peter could have employed a secretary to compose the letter. This cannot be definitively proved, but it is in the realm of possibility. Paul composed several letters this way.

Each section begins with an initial bibliography used for the research of that section. The next section includes the authors’ Greek text, which follows their conclusions on the textual variants in the passage. The next section covers those textual variants. These textual portions are usually two pages or more. The authors include many variants and seek to interact with them, no matter how minor the variant is. Should a question be raised regarding the text of 1 Peter, Williams and Horrell will likely have addressed it. Following the textual section, the authors begin a clause-by-clause exegetical section. This formatting helps locate the explanations within the larger unit. The authors conclude each unit with a summary section that contains their application and relevance for modern audiences. This last section is limited, usually only a few pages. Most of the commentary is given over to the exegesis of the text.

Williams and Horrell follow modern scholarly consensus in identifying Gentiles as the most likely recipients, though they offer some caveats (211–12). Against some critical scholarship, they suggest that 1 Peter was a unified letter (29). They identify three major sections of the letter: 1:13–2:10; 2:11–4:11; and 4:12–5:11 (36–37). However, they suggest that any attempt at identifying a structure is a scholarly exercise rather than “an act of ‘discovering’ what [the author] intended” (36).

An important passage in the first volume of the commentary set is 1:18. Peter employs the verb ἐλυτρώθητε to describe the readers’ present situation. Williams and Horrell discuss the backdrop of this term. They suggest two possible meanings. In Greek documents, the term describes the release of a prisoner or a slave in exchange for payment (508). In the LXX, the term is used with God as the subject and means to rescue from an oppressive situation (509). The later meaning is reflected in the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian and Babylonian captivity (509). The authors comment little on the debate of substitutionary versus ransom atonement views even after admitting this passage’s importance for that discussion (509). Instead, they believe that the author “melds together different traditions and re-interprets them in light of a Christian perspective” (509).

The authors’ theological discussions are a weakness that pervades the

commentary. Often, discussions of important issues are left unaddressed. For example, there is no mention of the resurrection in their comments on 1:21 (532–33). The authors fail to contribute meaningfully to Christological discussions despite admitting that 1:18–1:21 is a “christologically rich passage” (507). They do not directly state but imply that the author of 1 Peter denies the divinity of Jesus (533).

In the second volume, as in the first, the authors outline the book and do exegesis for each unit. The format is the same (see above), including bibliography, Greek text, textual criticism, and clause-by-clause exegesis. While the authors strive for objectivity, their critical perspectives heavily influence their interpretation of Scripture. For instance, in their interpretation of Peter’s instructions to wives in 3:1–7, the authors suggest that viewing the text as authoritative is, at best, a risky proposition (2:77). The authors take the connection between the slaves and wives as if the wife is called into the same role as the slave (2:75). More likely, the parallel is that both are in a subordinate role. The authors say the instructions to wives to stay committed to an unbelieving husband should be disbanded amid any threat of violence (2:75). The authors seem to stand in judgment over the text as they lament that this teaching does not “express a conviction about the essential equality of women and men” (2:75). They say that the teaching on gender roles in 1 Peter “is patriarchy: a moderate, considerate form of patriarchy, but patriarchy nonetheless” (2:77). This feminist approach is a common view in scholarship today.

Readers will also be interested in how the authors identify the “spirits in prison” (1 Pet 3:19) and the content of the message preached to them. The discussion on verse 19 stretches to about 30 pages and is thorough. Williams and Horrell work hard to demonstrate that the lexical data does not rule out spirits as dead humans or fallen angels. They do a good job demonstrating that the evidence for either view is not as clear-cut as some commentaries make it out to be. They give a few pages to the theory that Peter references Noah’s preaching to those alive during his time. Augustine championed this view. Williams and Horrell reject this in agreement with most of the literature on the topic. The authors spend considerable time on the recipients and their location. Ultimately, they decide that the spirits are the souls of dead humans in the afterlife. They cite the Greek teaching of Hades as evidence of a holding place in the spirit realm. This understanding would have been common in the broader culture of Greek mythology at the time of composition. One aspect of the topic they give less attention to is the content of what was preached. The two primary options are the gospel message or the message of the victory of Christ. The authors conclude that the gospel was preached to the dead human spirits because the gospel message was the only type of message Jesus preached during his ministry (2:241). Thus, any other message would be a departure from the normal pattern of Jesus’s teachings. However, this is a reductionist view of the ministry of Jesus. For example, in the gospels, Jesus pronounced judgement on those who disobeyed his word (Matt 23:13). The authors

fail to answer the objection many have raised regarding whether or not those who receive this message are given a second chance to believe.

The identity of the elders in 5:1 is often understood as a reference to the church's pastors among those to whom Peter is writing. However, Williams and Horrell understand this to be senior church members and not a reference to a specific office (2:506). They argue that Hellenistic and Judaistic cultures had the same position in their religious and civic communities. These were often leaders because of their social status and age. Thus, they assumed leadership responsibility in the religious institutions because of their status in the community. This leads the authors to conclude that the elders Peter addresses occupy a similar role as leaders, not a specific church office (2:504). They claim that "there is no mention of elders within the undisputed Pauline letters" (2:503). It is hard to know which Pauline leaders they consider "undisputed." Of course, the counterargument is that Paul gives qualifications for elders (1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1) and addresses elders in his letter to the church at Philippi (Phil 1:1).

Despite these flaws, which are not insignificant, the newest edition to the ICC series stands above the current literature on 1 Peter in terms of research and textual analysis. Williams and Horrell have provided a monumental service to Petrine scholars. This will be the commentary to interact with for academics who want to follow current studies on 1 Peter. This set would also be a good addition to a pastor's library for those wanting to do more academic-focused research. Commentaries on 1 Peter from Schreiner and Jobes will, I think, serve sermon preparation better and should be purchased first. Another drawback is the price of the commentary. At nearly \$100 a volume, this set may be out of reach for many men in ministry. In summary, the commentary on 1 Peter by Travis Williams and David Horrell is strong in the breadth of exegetical discussion and in the notes on the text. Though conservative readers will find faults, the commentary set will undoubtedly aid pastors and scholars in studying 1 Peter. With these caveats in mind, I commend the set as a good addition to a pastor's library.

Phil Cecil
Inter-City Baptist Church, Allen Park, MI

Revelation through Old Testament Eyes, by Tremper Longman III. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2022. 368 pp. \$29.99.

Tremper Longman needs no introduction to anyone even slightly familiar with evangelical Old Testament scholarship. During his illustrious career at Westminster Theological Seminary and Westmont College, Longman authored or co-authored a wide range of books, most notably a significant number of commentaries and an Old Testament introduction. He now brings his expertise to a niche New Testament commentary.