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Studies of John the Baptist have so far concentrated primarily upon two areas. First is his preaching, especially his apocalyptic speech (Q 3:7-9) with its promise of a coming figure (Q3:16-17; Mk 1:7-8), or his apparent doubts concerning the true identity of Jesus (Q 7:18-23). The second area of study is his actions, most notably his baptism (Mk l:4b, 5; Mt. 3:5-6), especially where it involves Jesus (Mk 1:9; Mt. 3:13-16a). While other aspects of the Baptist's life and ministry have been discussed, such as his Elijah-like garb, one area that has been largely overlooked is his diet. John's locusts and wild honey (Mk 1:6; Mt. 3:4) have received only limited attention by modern scholars. James A. Kelhoffer's study seeks to redress this.

Kelhoffer's work opens with a general inquiry into the diet of John the Baptist as it is presented in the Synoptic tradition. Chapter one lays the foundations by focusing upon John's eating habits in general. The locusts and wild honey are discussed, of course, as is John's fasting (Mk 2:18 et par), with its links to Jesus' ministry and the comparisons that are made between John's abstention and Jesus apparent excess (Q 7:32b-34). Kelhoffer next offers an overview of the current state of scholarship concerning John's diet. Here, various interpretations of John's chosen diet are considered starting with Erasmus' observations on locusts as human...
food. Among other things, John's food has been seen as an expression of asceticism, the natural diet of a wilderness dweller, a 'liberationist' diet and even a diet of no importance.

Since locusts occupy a prominent place on John's table, chapter two asks what indeed locusts are, and notes that the word *abridas* should more properly be rendered 'grasshoppers'. Next, a survey is made of descriptions and prescriptions concerning locusts beginning with Leviticus 11:22 and extending to the later Jewish literature of the Midrashim and Maimonides. This approach is repeated with reference to works on locusts originating in the Greco-Roman world.

Chapter three follows chapter two by defining its subject, in this case, honey. A short history of apiculture reveals that the cultivation of bee honey was all but unknown in John's day. This might have some connection with Lev 2:11, wherein honey is forbidden to be mixed with grain. Next is an analysis of references to honey in the Hebrew Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls, and by writers such as Philo of Alexandria, Aristotle and Pliny the Elder. The eating of wild honey, it seems, was neither particularly pleasant nor safe. John would have had to put up with inferior quantities and qualities. Since he had no idea which plants the bees had visited, John ran the risk of being poisoned if his honey had originated with toxic plants. With this in mind, Kelhoffer explores the possibility that 'honey' was not honey at all, but 'honey water' derived from the sap of trees.

So far, Kelhoffer's study has been text based. Chapter four marks a departure from this approach by using anthropology to explore the Baptist's food-gathering experience. Interesting comparisons are made between John and present-day locust eating as practised by peoples living in the Great Basin of North America and elsewhere. Kelhoffer also uses data from the National Academy of Sciences to determine the nutritional value of eating locusts and wild honeys, whatever the origin or definition of the latter.

Given that someone living primarily (Mark) or solely (Matthew) on such a diet would have been severely malnourished, Kelhoffer returns to texts as he discusses what locusts and wild honey could have meant to the Synoptic evangelists. The reader learns that neither John himself nor his contemporaries would have found much significance in his choice of foodstuff. Rather, the importance lies in the correlation, made by Mark and followed by Matthew, between John, Elijah, the wilderness and the eschaton. Luke's omission of this aspect of John reflects his concern to avoid making such a correlation. For Luke, it is Jesus, rather than John, who is to be likened to Elijah.

Chapter five marks another methodological departure in that it offers a rezep­tionsgeschichte of John the Baptist's diet, beginning with the vegetarian interpretation given to it by Justin Martyr, the Gospel of the Ebionites and several witnesses to Tatian's *Diatessaron*. Other areas of study include 'Figurative and Allegorical Interpretation of John's Diet' (pp. 148-152) and surveys of John's diet as a model in both the eastern and western traditions. The topic of vegetarianism is revisited in studies of the various interpretations of locusts made by commentators ranging from Isidore of Pelasium (c. 360-c. 435) to J.-P. Migne (1800-1875). The seventeenth-century Scottish poet Alexander Ross's denial that John ate insects shows the tenacity of belief in a vegetarian diet for the prophet, while the Seventh Day Adventist Ellen Gould Harmon White's (1827-1915) stance demonstrates that John's 'vegetarianism' survived the advent of critical scholarship.

The epilogue summarises the preceding chapters and reiterates the conclusions drawn in them. Kelhoffer emphasises the continuing need for philological refinement of New Testament texts combined with closer interaction with social and natural sciences, and historical-critical and literary approaches. Kelhoffer's own application of these methods in this study, especially his use of anthropology and entomology in earlier chapters, highlight this need and demonstrate its advantages. As
an incentive, perhaps, Kelhofer concludes his work by suggesting avenues for further investigation. Certainly, as this study shows, there is more still to be said about John the Baptist than has been said so far. The application of such methods to even the smallest piece of Baptist material opens a rich vein of knowledge that can only contribute to a greater understanding of John the Baptist, his environment and his world.

J. Wilkinson


The Codex Bezae has long attracted intense interest and enthusiastic devotion. In this volume a consistent focus by two scholars working in close cooperation for a decade makes the Codex Bezae into an occasion for engaging with textual criticism in a way that directly contributes to exegesis and interpretation. The authors represent a productive axis of British, Catalan, and French scholarship that augers well for the return of a textual orientation in the critical study of the New Testament.

The authors argue that Acts in the Bezan narration "present[s] the inner journey of the apostles as they leave behind their traditional Jewish teachings and expectations and, with considerable difficulty, finally come to understand and accept the message of Jesus" (p. 1). Since 1984, in publications noted in The Message of Acts in Codex Bezae, Josep Rius-Camps has carefully defended this view as a reading of Acts as such; here the perspective is investigated in respect of the Codex Bezae in comparison to the Alexandrian texts (principally Vaticanus, seconded by Sinaiticus).

The authors describe Bezae as a "‘fossilized’ text" that has been subjected to relatively little updating, although they stop short of embracing it as the original form of Acts: "No claim is being made that Codex Bezae transmits the original autograph of Luke; the contention is more simply that its text predates the Alexandrian tradition and is closer to the language and thought of the third evangelist" (p. 3). In so doing, they directly challenge the characterization of the "Western text" as an idiosyncratic farrago (p. 39), and acknowledge both the weight of the opinion they resist and more sympathetic treatments of the Codex Bezae by C.-B. Amphoux and É. Delebecque. They undertake a detailed comparison of Bezae with the Alexandrian text in order to establish their position, extending Jenny Read-Heimerdinger’s already considerable contributions (again, noted in this book’s excellent bibliography) to the understanding of Bezae as an exegetical and interpretative rendering.

In that variations involve 25% of the whole of Acts by the authors’ count (pp. 15-16), while Bezae is some 6.6% longer than the Alexandrian text, the decision to devote several volumes to the comparison is amply justified. The ambit of each volume is determined by structural features especially apparent in Bezae (pp. 20, 43, 59) involving resonance between Acts and the Gospel according to Luke (pp. 31-32) that can be crucial to an understanding of Acts (pp. 203-204, on Acts 3:1-10). Even variations of spelling—for example, in “Jerusalem”—are theoretically significant (pp. 22, 67), as one would expect in a text that reflects targumic and legendary traditions of Judaism (p. 25).
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