

Larry J. Kreitzer,

*Hierapolis in the Heavens: Studies in the Letter to the Ephesians,*

Library of New Testament Studies 368. London: T & T Clark/Continuum,

2007. Pp. 160.

In 1997 Larry Kreitzer published an excellent commentary on the Letter to the Ephesians where he argued that this NT letter, traditionally attributed to Paul, was written by someone who was a disciple of Paul in one church – he argues for Colossae, in the Lycus valley – to another in the area. This daughter-church he argued was in the city of Hierapolis (only a few miles from Colossae) which was famous for its volcanic cave that was believed to be one of the entrances to the underworld. Since then he has developed particular aspects of that basic thesis, or found new ways of arguing their credibility, in a series of articles in diverse academic locations, and now he has reprinted these studies in this book.

The book is best seen as simply a convenient repository for eight articles – and so there is a degree of overlap between them in several summaries of the main thesis as to the nature, origin, and destination of Ephesians from his 1997 commentary. The articles fall into two groups: the first seven examine particular aspects of Ephesians against the evidence from classical sources and the archaeology of the Lycus valley to see how that evidence throws light on passages or the whole letter by providing a suitable geographical and social setting for its origin. The cumulative effect of these articles is that one finds his basic argument becoming more and more settled

in one's mind as correct, and his exegesis of passages as convincing. One of the most attractive aspects of this collection is that he moves outside the normal range of evidence used by biblical scholars into the domains of the classicist and the archaeologist, then from their work draws new light for understanding early Christian documents. Several times one is startled by the new range of evidence (e.g. numismatic evidence in several places; the possibility that memories of earthquakes may stand behind images like 'being rooted and grounded in love' in Eph. 3:17), even if sometimes the evidence seems a little strained (e.g. the relevance of *choiros*, p. 91, to Eph. 5:4).

The second group has just one member: ch. 8 on the OT background to Eph. 2:13-22. Its argument is that the tradition of Solomon as a 'man of peace' was invoked to help understand the person and mission of Jesus. The paper is a far more traditional type of exegesis in that its argument is based on a set of citations which provide a possible context within which another, in this case from Ephesians, can be seen to belong. This article does not fit well with the others, and the collection would have more coherence as a book dedicated to the original social context of Ephesians had it been omitted.

This is an important collection by a foremost authority on Ephesians, it is a pity that there are some blemishes. The most striking is that the cross-references within the book are often to the original articles and not to their reprinted location within the book itself (e.g. p. 68), which can be confusing. Kreitzer has, helpfully, supplied an English translation for Greek and Latin quotations from classical writers, but he should note that the last paragraph of

the Greek text on p. 47 is not supplied in the translation; and the rendering of *Charonea* by 'jaws of hell' (also p. 47) is picturesque but inaccurate. Such criticisms aside, for anyone wishing to add to their understanding of the lives of the early churches, this book is important.

*University of Wales, Lampeter*

Thomas O'Loughlin