

Joel B. Green, ed., *Methods for Luke*. *Methods in Biblical Interpretation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Pp x + 157. \$ 26.00. ISBN 978-0-521-71781-6

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This is the second subsequent book released by Cambridge University Press that specifically deals with the issues of the methods used in the biblical interpretation of the Gospels. The first one focused on the Gospel of Matthew (2009) and was edited by M. A. Powell. This time Joel B. Green and his co-workers (Clare K. Rothschild, Turid Karlsen Seim, Justo L. González) have prepared a volume devoted to the Gospel of Luke. The Californian scholar begins with an introductory essay entitled “Reading Luke”, giving his readers a wide panorama of the methods, their intent and style. The author lists some key-factors that attest the inevitability of a disciplined approach to the text. Firstly, the very process of the shaping of the Bible calls for an appropriate methodology at each of its stages. Secondly, the variety of the genres shows the necessity for a plurality of methods. Thirdly, the multiple settings in which the Bible is read show various possible approaches in studying it. And fourthly, all kinds of external methods (theological, sociological, philosophical etc.) could be engaged depending on people’s sensitivity. This is why Green sees method not only as “steps comprising its rules”, but also as the necessity of clarity used to interpret biblical texts, along with a certain awareness and commitment by which one engages with these texts (p. 5). Quoting T. L. Haskell, he claims that nobody is neutral towards the text, because all interpreters have their “preconceptions, biases and aims.” However, they are called for objectivity, i.e. “the capacity for self-overcoming” and the sincerity in representing the views of others (p. 6). The editor admits that the four short studies presented in the book do not cover the whole spectrum of biblical methods, but he declares that they are “representative of major currents in the field” (p. 6). Each of the four chapters that follow the introduction contains two separated sections. In the first one, the authors introduce their readers to a general description of a chosen method and its particular features. Then they give some concrete examples

of applying the method of interpretation to the chosen texts. In two cases (Rotschild, Karlsen Seim), the exemplary pericope is the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 20: 45–21: 4). In the next two cases (Green, González) Jesus' denouncing the scribes and the story of the widow's offering (Luke 16:19-31) have been selected. At the end of the book the editor proposes a bibliography for further reading and encloses indexes of the Scripture, ancient sources and modern authors.

C.K. Rotschild's chapter is entitled "Historical Criticism." Such a vast and complex task should have probably taken up more space than about thirty pages, but she has managed to give a brief explanation concerning most of the historical-critical components (textual criticism, source criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, social-scientific criticism and archaeology). One might wonder in what way the rhetorical issues have been included into the typically diachronic approach. Naturally, it is only the so-called ancient rhetoric that the author recognises, but it is still synchrony that is involved rather than diachrony. There are two further disappointments in Rotschild's work. Although it is a common conviction that the redactional criticism is the final and most important stage of the historical-critical method, the author pays little attention to this particular phase of biblical analysis and she seems to have difficulty in using it fully in her exegesis. Moreover, devoting only a few paragraphs to social-scientific criticism, she finds it rather disputable and omits it entirely in her exegetical approach. Rotschild is fully aware of the many limitations of the research method presented, but she still sees it as an effective tool for exegesis (p. 40). However, her exegesis is not the best example of the proper utilisation of the principles of the method.

The chapter written by Turid Karlsen Seim, "Feminist Criticism", concerns a contextual approach rather than a method. Nevertheless, the reader gets a fresh insight into Luke 21:1-4 in the context of feminist sensitivity. Karlsen Seim dismisses the traditional interpretation that Jesus shows the widow as an example of proper piety and dedication toward God. Neither does she agree to see the scene as an illustration of the poor women's abuse by the religious authorities. Instead, she underlines the woman's vital importance in the temple event, and her special role in exposing social and religious injustice in Jesus' times. It is true that the widow is loyal to the religious structure and its practises even though the system seems to take advantage of her, but her faithfulness in discrimination comes to light. The Norwegian theologian from Oslo is convinced that in this way, "a feminist counter-reading is found inscribed right into this patriarchal text itself" (p. 73).

J.B. Green has chosen to introduce the reader to narrative criticism. As his first step, he draws a quick historical sketch of the origins of narratology. In

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his opinion the Church focused more on historiography than on the Gospel narratives, and thus made it difficult to develop a narrative approach to the biblical text (p. 78). Neither did the classical way of commenting on the Gospels pay much attention to the narrative sequence of the books (p. 79). Then Green gives three ways of finding the meaning in the biblical text: behind-the-text, in-the-text and in-front-of-the-text, and offers four reasons for treating the text in such a wide context: the Gospels and the Acts are narratives within narratives; they are narratives with external, historical referents; they intend effects; and they invite, and require the participation of their audiences (pp. 81-92). He then gives a descriptive definition in four points of what narrative is: 1) a defining feature of humankind and thus making sense of our lives; 2) locating events in a temporal frame characterised by cause-and-effect relations; 3) not only the story counts, but the way it was told (discourse); 4) many elements of the narrative have only one particular aim (telos) (pp. 92-95). Finally, he lists seven elements of narrative: sequence, staging (place), time, characterisation (of the narrative figures), perspective, insider (narrator) information, intertextuality (pp. 95-99).

In his exegesis of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31) he concentrates on the Lucan motifs of eschatological reversal, poverty and wealth. Nonetheless, he postulates that faithful hearing and enacting of the Scripture is the meta-aim for the narrative of Luke 16:14-31. This is contrasted with the Pharisaic attitude, not only because of the Pharisees, but also because of Jesus' disciples. They are in danger of becoming like the Pharisees, and are called to hear Moses and the prophets accurately, and thus become true followers (p. 112).

The last chapter, "A Latino Perspective", written by Justo L. González, is a study of the same parable. However, his way of approaching the text is different. He acknowledges a set of existential steps that people usually go through. Firstly, they read the Scripture or the Scripture is read to them. Secondly, they become doubtful about the-only-one interpretation. Thirdly, they discover various meanings in the text that frequently depend on one's experience and location (p. 121). González stresses the need of keeping any biblical interpretation within the existential context of the interpreters and their addressees. For him, the phenomenon of popular Latin American piety that developed in the specific socio-political situation of Latin American countries is an important context. Thus, since such countries are full of prejudice and marginality, dedication to love and justice is a priority. González proposes a method of circular (or spiral) interpretations that clarify, step-by-step the subject of the exegesis. J.L. Segundo has called it a "hermeneutical circle" (experience, theological suspicion, theological reality, exegetical suspicion,

new hermeneutics). The author also refers to the well-known hermeneutical triad: seeing, judging, and acting (p. 126). He sees a particular meaning and actuality in the “subversive reversal[s]” pictured by Luke in both volumes, for they are signs of total change and a significant improvement in existence to those who are suppressed and afflicted (pp. 127-134).

Reading the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in the Latin American context González retains different meanings. For him, the parable is not only the advocacy of the nameless poor over the rich but it is also the question of the law, “about how one recognizes it, and about how one obeys it” (p. 139). The gap mentioned in the parable is not just the one between heaven and hell, but it is the reality of our present existence (p. 141). Thus the situation of contemporary Christians who do nothing about the poor today is most probably even worse than those five brothers evoked in the parable, for they were refused any revelation from above but the Church has the testimony of the resurrected Christ himself (p. 143).

To sum up, this book could be a good source of methodological knowledge for students of the New Testament, and a useful guide on how to interpret Luke’s Gospel.