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Sunday, July 2, 1995

Hi,

I'm just sitting here having watched, as I do most days, a bit of video film on Western Art in one context or another. Illustrations of the New Testament, which no doubt have been staring at me from un-ingested pages for years, seem suddenly from every side to be forcing themselves down my throat, insisting that any understanding of anything demands understanding them first. That's your work, of course.

The power of the New Testament, which is to say The Christ Story, is not so much allegorical as it is mythic. Resonant treatment of it calls into life a nascent flood of feelings that, quite regardless of one's personal or even cultural parochialisms, is very wide and rich and deep. That resonance of treatment is what you have achieved in this narrative, I believe. I know you achieved it for me, and while I am an unreliably pre-disposed reader, I think I would be able to see at least the structural barriers to true success if they were there. And I just don't see them: the purity of line in the narrative, the delicately simple handling of the referential, the good tug of the narrative movement ever-forward into denouement, and always the voice. All of these serve quietly to remove conventional barriers and clear the way for our immersion. The voice, the narrative authority assigned here to the Christ, creates him for us--and, after all, that is the great, the tremendous goal of the narrative.

I'm not in the mood tonight to pass quickly on to the question of editorial detail, but there are one or two things I perhaps should mention.

p. 302: He says, "Their truth was not land but punishment of sin." I would add a comma after land, just to give us that tiny pause to collect the reference, which is four pages earlier (bottom 298). It's too wonderful a line not to be give a chance to hit home.

p. 307: when the third paragraph opens with the crosses already erected on the hill, and then we go on to the actual crucifixion, you should be aware that you have departed from an immense convention. In it, Christ is nailed to the cross while it is prone, and then it is hoisted up into the air, hitting him with his own weight at the nails.

sees
hearing
then when
lifted,
he sees
heel.

p. 309: In the last paragraph, as I may have mentioned, he refers to his cross as a crucifix. The convention, once again, is that his gibbet was the cross, and that only the commemorative representation of the fact of his crucifixion, with body-figure attached, is called the crucifix.

There is a host of typo material throughout, but not to talk about now. Thank you very much for this. I'll write again soon,

BZ

Only one general comment this time:

The carpentry: I very much like what you have done to develop J's thinking in the sections on carpentry, but I still feel as if I'm learning vastly more about carpentry than I ever wanted to know. I think you could cut the lists and technicalities by roughly half and still make all your important points about J--he was a meticulous craftsman with a sensual appreciation of the material world. Right now it's awfully slow--we read this book to learn about Yeshua, NOT because we have a burning need to build a woodshed Nazarene style. There is, I suppose, something touching about this extraordinary character who, with all else, is a very fine carpenter who takes deep delight in talking shop (How many millenia has it been since the Son of God could explain the contents of his toolbox or the details of veneers to someone?) but it might work better for the book if you handled this another way--the plethora of detail makes for a pace as unyielding as two wooden legs.

Lots of improvement this time around. Better on Mary, although just ONCE I would like to see her do something nice (even if her grumpy firstborn does not recognize it as such.) OK, she does let him go off preaching without a fuss after the marriage at Cana. But just a tad more--please???

I did get twitchy over the overabundance of "Now was I's" and "now did I's" as if you were going to be fined \$1000 for using an ordinary past tense. I tried to tackle each case on its merits to my ear--which hopefully does not hear too different a melody from your own.

It's getting there. . .

Page in G P in mss.
 ① ✓ p409 [1-3] * ③ 12 new wine
 ③ ✓ 379(1) [7-12] * ⑫ for the
 note.

④ ✓ 379(2) [13-17] * ⑭+⑮ ne, writing
 390 → ⑬, ⑮ a + ⑮ b, ⑰

⑥ ✓ 395 [22-26] * ②⑤

⑩ ✓ 431, 437 [48-53] [50-56] ⑤⑩+⑤⑪, ⑤⑫

⑫ ✓ 444, [119-124] [124-132] ⑬⑩+⑬⑪

↓ ⑭ ✓ 361 [141-144] [152-156] ⑮③
 338 ↑ ⑮ ⑮⑦

⑮ ✓ 305, 310(1) [145-149; 278-284] [157-161]
 433(1,2), 434
 452(1)

③⑩ ✓ 445, 322 [181-191] [199-209] ⑮⑩, ⑮⑪
 206
 206 in

③⑧ ✓ 340 + 363; 364 [239-247] [259-267]

④③ ~~305, 310(1), 433(1+2), 434, 452(1)~~

[278-284]

④⑥, ④⑦, ④⑧ 310(2), 316, 339, 402-407, 446, 452(2)
 402+3 404-406
 +1 Resner,

Miscellanea → 278