

He does agree with the option of the objective genitive in other Pauline passages, and he admits that even here both options might be seen as operative simultaneously. M. thus clarifies the point of Paul's argument, but he might have elaborated the content of the "faith of Christ" and given some attention to its christological implications.

While M. has adopted new options in a number of instances, he retains the traditional interpretations in others; e.g., of the *stoicheia* as "rudimentary principles of religious life" rather than "demonic spirits," of the concluding parenetic section (5:13–6:10) not as a later interpolation but as a section following from the argumentation earlier in the Letter, of the opponents as Jewish-Christian, not gnostic, legalists and spirituals, of Paul not as an antinomian but as one who expects Christians to live according to the demands of the Mosaic Law. He finds that the teaching of the "two ways" in Judaism and early Christianity better represents the perspective in the lists of virtues and vices rather than the Hellenistic moral sources. He also notes the terminology of magic and spells earlier in the Letter but does not draw the observations into his interpretation. Thus, although he characterizes the audience as Gentile, he rests on standard Jewish perspectives for his understanding of the Letter.

Prudent judgment, a balance between traditional exegesis and well-argued adoption of contemporary views, correction of church-inspired interpretation, and applications of his exegesis to contemporary church concerns—all these characterize this readable and useful commentary.

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FRANCIS J. MOLONEY, S.D.B., *Belief in the Word: Reading the Fourth Gospel, John 1–4* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993). Pp. xvii + 230. Paper \$18.95.

This work represents an exercise in literary criticism of the Gospel: a close reading of John 1–4, following the canons of narrative criticism, with a special emphasis on the reading process. I find it to be an excellent example of the new kind of commentary emerging out of the literary movement in biblical criticism. In an introductory chapter Dr. Moloney sets forth in detail the work's methodological approach and underlying theoretical orientation. It is a position that I would characterize as well within the text-dominant pole of reader-response criticism, with a strong residual influence of traditional historical criticism.

First, M. argues for overall literary unity, with traditional literary difficulties consistently resolved along integrative lines. Second, M. adopts a highly formalist approach vis-à-vis the text. Thus, he differentiates among the different levels of narration present in the text, concentrating on that of the implied author and implied reader (which is basically collapsed with that of the narrator and narratee). He focuses on a reconstruction of the implied reader created by the implied author, a procedure regarded as objective, given the controls present in the text, and he approaches this implied reader from two different perspectives: (1) a first-time, temporal reader, who makes all sorts of connections as the material is presented—the dominant mode, and (2) an experienced, sophisticated reader who is able to discern all sorts of structural patterns—a subordinate mode.

Third, behind such unity and formalism, M. posits a strong historical foundation. Thus, the Gospel story is seen as ultimately addressing the Johannine community, its "intended" or first real readers, whose history M. readily outlines. This story is selectively assembled from the many stories present in the "recorded memory" of the community, which the storyteller has made its own, and reflects the "essential story" of the saving revelation of God in Jesus. Finally, in ideological terms, M.'s emphasis is clearly on the theological message of the implied author centered on the person and role of Jesus as the Word of God.

A concluding chapter summarizes the findings of such a reading of John 1-4. Structurally, M. argues for a threefold division of the material: 1:1-18; 1:19-51; and 2:1-4:54, a Cana-to-Cana cycle further subdivided into four narrative sections (2:1-12; 2:12-3:36; 4:1-42; and 4:43-54) and revealing a complex parallel structure (A B X C D B' C' X' D' A'). Theologically, such a division, via the different characters involved, presents a full spectrum of opinion regarding Jesus, both among Jews and Gentiles, ranging from authentic faith (A D A'), to imperfect and partial faith (C C'), to lack of faith (B B'). By means of such a structure and its underlying theological agenda, the implied reader—and ultimately all real readers (from intended readers to contemporary readers)—are called upon to take a stand with regard to Jesus' claims as Word of God.

In conclusion, M. has produced a well-informed, thorough, and innovative reading of John 1-4. Readers of his work will no doubt disagree with him on any number of issues, both minor and fundamental, ranging from the methodological to the theoretical to the interpretive. I myself, for example, would take issue with the following stances, among others. From a methodological point of view, the intratextual narrational levels are effectively collapsed, and there is a much too innocent distinction posited between history (= the Gospel) and fiction. From a theoretical point of view, I would take issue with the dominant objectivist nature of the whole enterprise, given its grounding in text-dominant reader response (e.g., do all readers come up with the same implied reader?) and the recurring appearance of comments from a reader-dominant perspective, whose consequences for the dominant objectivist position are not fully pursued, and which leave this reader wondering at times exactly where M. stands. From an interpretive point of view, there is an exclusive focus on the theological dimensions of the message and the actual structure proposed in the light of this message, especially with regard to the reactions to Jesus attributed to a number of the characters in question. Nevertheless, readers of his work will also find in M., as I do, a first-rate and refreshingly up-to-date commentator of the Gospel and will look forward to the proposed continuation of the project with regard to the remainder of the Gospel.

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ELIO PERETTO, *La sfida aperta: Le strade della violenza e della nonviolenza dalla Bibbia a Lattanzio* (Rome: Borla, 1993). Pp. 348. Paper L 40.000.

Why the author judges the title of his work "rather modest" is difficult to surmise, especially since the book is not so much about the "open challenge" that violence and nonviolence pose, as it is about war and peace—but of course that title has



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