

GEORGE MLAKUZHYYL, S.J., *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel* (AnBib 117; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1987). Pp. xx + 370. Paper L 45.000.

This volume is a doctoral dissertation written under the direction of A. Vanhoye at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. As the title indicates, the volume undertakes a twofold task: a literary-structural investigation of the Fourth Gospel and a subsequent delineation of the christocentric theology which the proposed structure is said to convey and advance. The proposal consists of five major steps in corresponding chapters.

The first two chapters are of a preparatory nature. The introductory chapter posits the basic presupposition for such a study, viz., the literary unity of the Gospel as it stands. Though a number of additions to the Gospel (e.g., chap. 21) are acknowledged, Mlakuzhyil correctly regards all such additions as ultimately unimportant, since they do not affect the fundamental structure of the work. In the second chapter, M. proceeds to outline in detail twenty-four different types of structural proposals to be found in the literature; a fundamental criticism is then brought to bear against all such previous proposals: the criteria employed have not been sufficiently comprehensive and consequently such proposals have been quite unsatisfactory. Two basic principles emerge out of this criticism, one sound (the criteria must be as comprehensive as possible) and the other unsound (such criteria are objective and a comprehensive delineation of them will avoid all subjectivism); these two principles come directly to the fore in chaps. 3 and 4, the very heart of this work.

The third chapter is quite good in the former respect. Thus, in keeping with the first basic principle, M. proceeds to give a comprehensive delineation of the various criteria to be employed in the search for the overall structure of the Gospel. Good explanations and examples are provided of twelve literary criteria, twelve dramatic criteria, and four structural criteria. At this point, M. formulates another sound basic principle, that of convergence, in the quest for the overall structure: the greater the number of such criteria involved in any one place or at any one time, the easier it becomes to arrive at the structure of a unit, regardless of length or scope. At the same time, however, in keeping with the second principle, M. emphasizes throughout the objective character of these criteria and this third principle; yet it becomes increasingly evident that a great deal of subjectivity, of personal vision, is indeed involved throughout the entire enterprise, not only in the very act of discerning the different criteria in question but also in the very exercise of the principle of convergence.

In the fourth chapter, then, the overall structure of the Gospel is worked out in close detail. The proposal may be summarized as follows: (1) The Gospel contains four main divisions (an introduction [1:1-2:11]; a conclusion [20:30-31]; and two central divisions [2:1-12:50; 13:1-20:29]); the introduction and the conclusion reveal a clear chiasmic arrangement (C B A A B C). (2) In the two central divisions five major sections can be readily identified (two within each division plus a central bridge section): each of these also reveals a chiasmic arrangement and the entire series of such arrangements further reveals a developing spiral pattern: 2:1-4:54 (A B C C B A); 5:1-10:42 (B C D D C B); 11:1-12:50 (C C); 13:1-17:26 (C D E E D C); 18:1-20:29 (C D E E D C). (3) This structure is entirely christocentric from beginning to end.

In the final chapter, M. proceeds to trace the unfolding of this christocentric theological axis through the proposed structure: from a presentation of Christ as Messiah (A); to Christ as the prophet/Messiah, with a hint of his status as Son of God (B); to Christ as Son of Man, Son of God, and life-giver (C); to the true identity of the Christ in terms of his origins (D); to the ecclesiological implications of belief (E).

The overall proposal is thus quite subtle and quite complex; it is also quite problematic and unconvincing. In many cases, first of all, the delineation of the proposed structural units, whether major or minor, is highly debatable and not at all as objective as claimed. In many cases, furthermore, the proposed chiasmic arrangements appear quite forced, fitting the material into compartments which do not adequately describe or represent it. Similarly, the proposed development of the christological axis through the Gospel is ultimately rather forced as well, once again forcing the material into categories which do not easily contain it. In fact, as the proposal grows more and more subtle and complex, it also becomes more and more problematic and unconvincing.

On the one hand, therefore, the volume does have much to commend it: a very clear and consistent line of argumentation throughout; a very extensive and informed acquaintance with the secondary literature; a very sharp, thorough, and sustained attention to the literary dimension of the Gospel. On the other hand, the volume goes too far for its own good. The repeated claims to objectivity fail to take into account the subjective dimension inherent in all interpretation, including the present one; the proposed structure becomes far too unwieldy to prove convincing and acceptable; the element of story tends to vanish altogether in the process, yielding instead to a series of progressive christological teachings. Despite such serious reservations, I believe that the volume does make a very important contribution to Johannine studies and deserves close and serious attention.

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LEON MORRIS, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1987). Pp. xii + 578. \$27.95.

Formerly principal of Ridley College in Melbourne, Australia, Morris has authored numerous books on the NT, including commentaries on Luke, John, 1 Corinthians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Revelation. He has recently written *The Cross of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988).

This full-scale scholarly commentary on Romans begins with an introduction discussing the issues of authorship, destination, date and place of writing, occasion, contents, the shorter edition(s), and the destination of chap. 16. The verse-by-verse commentary on the translation of Romans according to the New International Version presents the Epistle by means of the following structural outline: introduction (1:1-15), thesis (1:16-17), the way of deliverance (1:18-5:21), the way of Godliness (6:1-8:39), the place of Israel (9:1-11:36), Christian living (12:1-15:13) and conclusion (15:14-16:27). Included are short essays on the righteousness of God, truth, the



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