

or turned on their head (4:1-5). Moreover, much that is crucial in these chapters seems to give the lie to F's perspective (1:18-2:16, and especially 3:5-17, which seems radically misunderstood).

Similar questions can also be raised about F's perspective on 2 Cor 6:3-10. Thus one finds his all too frequent use of "clearly" in concluding or supporting sentences somewhat disconcerting. But these issues are raised as caveats. If one does not have here the last word on these passages, the contribution of this study is considerable, and it should serve as a point of reference for some years to come.

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ROBERT TOMSON FORTNA, *The Fourth Gospel and Its Predecessor: From Narrative Source to Present Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988). Pp. xvi + 332. N.P.

This volume represents a major contribution to Johannine studies. For the past two decades Fortna has studied the composition of the Fourth Gospel from a source-critical perspective, beginning with his *The Gospel of Signs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1970) and continuing with numerous articles up to and including the present volume. This volume, however, goes well beyond all previous work in devoting as much attention to the proposed narrative source as to its subsequent "Johannine" redaction; as such, the volume represents a clear—and excellent—example of the redaction critical method in biblical analysis and interpretation.

The volume has three major sections. A brief introduction explains its basic methodology and aims—the presence of numerous literary difficulties or "aporias" in the present Gospel text as both evidence for the existence of two different literary layers and keys to their separation from one another. A first and quite extensive major part undertakes this separation in terms of twenty sections focusing on different narrative scenes of the Gospel where such an enterprise is deemed at all possible. Within each section, the same procedure is followed: a beginning running commentary on the reconstructed source; a subsequent running commentary on its Johannine redaction; and a concluding justification, highly detailed and technical, for the preceding separation. At the end, three excursuses focus on the source's genre, relationship to the Synoptics, and sociocultural characteristics. A second and much smaller major part presents in highly systematic fashion the theological development from source to redaction in terms of six major categories: messiahship; signs and faith; salvation; the death of Jesus; eschatology and community; and use of locale regarding Jesus' itinerary and the Jews.

The overall thesis can be summarized as follows. (1) There were two originally independent sources, a Signs Source and a Passion Source. The Signs Source was both a narrative (consisting of an opening scene with the Baptist, a series of eight signs by Jesus in a rough geographical sequence from Galilee to Jerusalem, and a formal conclusion) and a gospel (presenting the good news in its purest form: the signs proving Jesus' identity as the Messiah long expected). The Passion Source was

also a narrative (consisting of passion traditions leading to a study of resurrection) but a lesser sort of gospel (while the passion traditions justified the unexpected and shocking death of Jesus in terms of scriptural necessity and fulfillment, the resurrection study proclaimed the good news—the Messiah had risen from the dead). (2) These two sources were combined, with some redaction and rearrangement, by the author of the Signs Source into a Signs Gospel, a much longer continuous narrative and “more both Gospel and a Gospel” than either preexisting source: Jesus’ resurrection now served not only to overcome the problem posed by his death but also as his last and greatest sign and proof of identity. This document was a missionary tract designed to convince Greek-speaking Jews that because of his signs and despite his death, Jesus was Messiah. (3) A thoroughly comprehensive and multidimensional “Johannine” redaction of this source resulted in the present Gospel text (minus post-Johannine additions), in which the original narrative sequence and christological focus on Jesus as Messiah were creatively transformed and greatly expanded.

The work represents in every aspect an excellent and highly sophisticated application of the redaction critical method, reflecting not only many years of work but also the wisdom of a mature scholar. Its line of argumentation remains quite smooth and clear throughout, though the sections on justification can be, quite naturally, rather involved and taxing. Both the running commentaries of the first part and the theological expositions of the second part contain a wealth of insights into the composition and message of the Gospel as a whole.

The work also raises certain fundamental questions of methodology, which can only be briefly addressed here. Though the *aporia* is adopted as the basic key to the separation of the layers, not all *aporias* are equally evident or convincing; besides, after a while, the task of separation seems to take on a life of its own. It is still very difficult to accept, from both a source and a tradition critical perspective, that the early stages of the Fourth Gospel included only narrative material, with all speech or conversation material coming from the redaction; in this regard, the initial distinction made between the former as “earthly” or “unspiritual” and the latter as “unearthly” or “spiritual” is far more problematic than helpful. The resulting contrast of the two narratives in question, source and redaction, is given too neat an either/or formulation: the former is simple, extremely focused, and unidimensional; the latter is quite complex, open-ended, and multidimensional. The literary question of genre is pursued in an exclusively theological fashion: that which “proclaims” the good news is gospel, a category which further admits of degrees depending on the extent and nature of the proclamation involved. Finally, can one really claim that the present meaning of the text cannot be fully and properly understood without such a detailed knowledge of its process of composition?

In conclusion, let there be no doubt that this is truly a major contribution to Johannine scholarship. As an exercise in source and redaction criticism, the work is superb. Its overall proposal strikes me, however, as ultimately too massive, too problematic, too unnecessary—especially now when the discipline finds itself in the very midst of the literary critical explosion.

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