Carter's "John: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist" - Book Review

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UNDERSTANDING MATTHEW: THE EARLY CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW OF THE FIRST GOSPEL.

Writing in the spirit of D. Bonhoeffer, Westerholm approaches Matthew’s Gospel in order to know “what Jesus wants.” He admits there are other ways of reading this and any Gospel: as a sociologist, as a linguist, or out of mere curiosity. The danger is that with the passage of time the Gospel message has become overlaid with “incomprehensible sermons,” “harsh laws,” and “human institutions.” Religion has been formed by history and takes place within history. It reflects its cultural background. All this must be kept in mind when reading Matthew and attempting to understand his message. Westerholm’s study is brief but thought-provoking. It is extremely readable and by no means boring. It is not a line-by-line commentary, but a series of reflections on aspects of Matthew whose content is seen in the titles of the chapters: worldviews and perspectives; don’t worry or be afraid; a dialog with the Almighty; the dawn of a new Age; the Lord and life of the disciple (Bonhoeffer’s discipleship). For Westerholm, the story of Jesus in Matthew warns against those who would only play at religion in order to avoid the real demands of God. Open Westerholm’s slim treatise at random and a telling phrase will leap from the page. This is biblical popularization at its best.

Casimir Bernas
Holy Trinity Abbey


Assuming an undergraduate biblical literature course, Kenney introduces English majors to different interpretative approaches through a detailed study of Mark, called “Lessons.” These “Lessons” invite students to interpret Mark themselves through close readings. The different interpretations arise largely from these students’ differing theological presuppositions. Eight “Lectures” provide theological (lectures one and eight), historical (lecture two), and comparative literature (lectures six and seven) foundations for the “Lessons,” as well as a literary overview of Mark’s genre (including embedded, largely form-critical, genres), structure (gradually concealing and then revealing Jesus’s identity), and themes (one knows Jesus’s identity only at the foot of the cross) (lectures three through five). As he recognizes, Kenney charts no new ground in Mark’s interpretation—with the possible exception of his interpretation of 15:37-38 as a giving of the spirit and an exorcism of YHWH from the Temple. Curiously, the work does not interact with classic literary analyses of Mark (like those of Kermode, Rhoads and Michie, etc.).

Richard Walsh
Methodist University


In this new and readable introduction to the Gospel of John, Carter guides the reader through a thoughtful consideration of important interpretive issues. In Part One, the first six chapters present helpful treatments of: John’s genre as an ancient revelatory biography; John’s plot featuring responses to Jesus as the revelatory agent of God; John’s characters as conveyors of and responders to revelation; John’s distinctive dualism; and John’s rhetoric. Part Two of Carter’s book outlines John’s interpretive approach to Scripture and other traditions and provides a brief survey of approaches to the history of the Johannine situation. Especially valuable is his developing of the impact of the Roman presence under Domitian upon the Johannine situation. Part Three outlines the work of the evangelist, beginning with the authorship and composition of John, and concluding with its message and reading it in a pluralistic world. Few new judgments are made, but the overall approach is helpful, posing a fair and useful treatment of recent Johannine approaches and of many important issues.

Paul N. Anderson
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In a rare combination of interdisciplinary approaches, Lioy analyzes the prologues of Genesis and John in the light of the search for ultimate reality. Beginning with critiques of approaches to ultimate reality, Lioy engages his task in an “analytical, integrative, and thematic fashion.” An analysis of Gen 1:1-2:3 exposes a polemical diatribe against the