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rejects it as a foundational document of the Johannine group (pp. 283, 284). Lieu notes that 3 John shares some of the features of 2 John "but it lacks the latter's studied anonymity" as well "as the numerous echoes of 1 John" (p. 265), and leaves the issue of the relationship of the three letters otherwise unresolved.

In this commentary Lieu achieves a fresh look at the Johannine letters in which she attempts to free them "from the shadow of the Fourth Gospel, to which they are undoubtedly related" (p. ix). While she rightly argues that interpretation must not be enslaved to reconstructed historical scenarios that exist only in the mind of modern scholars, the value of her approach will be most appreciated by those who agree with her controlling belief that the author(s) of 1, 2, and 3 John had no knowledge of the Fourth Gospel, but only of the tradition from which it independently emerged.

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*1-3 John*. By Robert W. Yarbrough. BECNT. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008, xix + 434 pp., \$39.99.

Yarbrough highlights six features intended to distinguish his work on the Johannine letters from other commentaries: (1) his presupposition about the historical accuracy of Jesus' earthly ministry; (2) his application of computer aids; (3) his additional notes dedicated to text-critical discussions; (4) his interaction with the most recent commentaries on the Johannine letters; (5) his incorporation of material from commentators of the past with the help of the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (Vol. 11: *James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude* [ed. Gerald Bray; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000]); and (6) his consideration of culturally diverse thinking that extends beyond Western civilization (pp. ix-xiii). His distinctions are a tall order, with Yarbrough achieving primarily numbers one through four. As for numbers five and six, he favors interaction with Reformers Calvin (66 references) and Luther (23 references), and his discussions about other cultures are merely sprinkled in a little here and a little there. In fact, the subject and author indexes indicate clearly Yarbrough's slim follow-through for numbers five and six.

Nevertheless, Yarbrough excels in meeting the expectations of the series. Like other commentaries in the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series, *1-3 John* blends scholarly depth, exegetical detail, and attention to critical problems (p. vii). The commentary divides into three sections: 1 John (pp. 3-325), 2 John (pp. 329-60), and 3 John (pp. 363-87), with each book being translated, interpreted exegetically with a critical eye, and discussed in a systematic manner.

The section on 1 John begins with an introduction in which Yarbrough argues for the textual certainty of the letters (pp. 3-4), apostolic authorship for the letters (pp. 5-21), a historical and geographical setting around Ephesus (pp. 16-21), a sevenfold literary structure for 1 John (pp. 21-25), and the significance of John's letters (pp. 25-28). Consequently, Yarbrough finds "it plausible to interpret his [John's] letters within the general time and setting ascribed to him by biblical and patristic sources" (p. 15). Immediately following this well-articulated understanding for 1 John is the exegesis of the letter.

Based upon "the divisions that came to be standard among scribal copyists through the centuries, particularly in Byzantium" (p. 21; cp. 295), Yarbrough divides 1 John into seven units of thought. These provide the major points of his detailed outline: (1) "The Central Burden: God is Light" (1:1-2:6; pp. 29-92); (2) "Primary Commandment: Embody

the Age-Old Message" (2:7-17; pp. 93-138); (3) "Key Counsel: Abide in His Anointing (Truth) and Receive Eternal Life" (2:18-3:8; pp. 139-90); (4) "Core Teaching: Love, Works, Trust" (3:9-4:6; pp. 191-230); (5) "Foundational Imperative: God's Love" (4:7-14; pp. 231-49); (6) "Illustrative Appeal: Renewed and Expanded Invitation to Love" (4:15-5:15; pp. 250-95); and (7) "Concluding Admonition: Pastoral Counsel, Assurance, and Warning" (5:13-21; pp. 305-25).

Each of these seven divisions receives a systematic and consistent discussion throughout the commentary. First, a contextual orientation for the entire division is provided. Second, every major sub-section of the outline begins with an overview, appearing within a light-gray shaded area, "to assist the reader in locating salient sections of the treatment of each passage: introductory comments and concluding summaries" (p. viii). These introductory comments are followed immediately by Yarbrough's translation of the verses to be discussed, as well as his exegesis and exposition of those verses. He then concludes every sub-section with "Additional Notes." It is in these notes that he "offers remarks on every textual variant in John's Epistles found in NA<sup>27</sup>" (p. x).

The sections on 2 and 3 John also begin with introductions (pp. 329-32, 363-64). Yet they are, as expected, more focused on the issues unique to each letter. For 2 John, the major concern is the recipient, a church that is "in danger of going significantly astray" (p. 332). For 3 John, it is a personal letter that resembles "a brisk note of encouragement to a trusted and well-grounded colleague, not a letter of formal instruction, diplomatic appeal, or christological testimony" (p. 364). Furthermore, Yarbrough points out the epistolary structure (i.e. greetings, well-wishes, body, closing) as a stark contrasting feature to 1 John. Consistent with his treatment of 1 John, Yarbrough systematically provides a contextual orientation for each division in 2 and 3 John and a discussion of the major sub-sections that include translation, exegesis and exposition, and text-critical notes.

Without dispute, the format of the commentary and the presentation of Yarbrough's material are well done. It is difficult to miss what Yarbrough believes to be the threefold driving force for the letters: "historical-theological truth (doctrine), ethical integrity, and relational warmth." He highlights over and over again how he perceives this doctrinal, ethical, and relational focus suits all three Johannine letters (in 1 John, pp. 30, 50, 73, 84, 87, 139, 165, 183-84, 187, 253, 272, 306, 310, 323; in 2 John, p. 242; in 3 John, p. 375). Unfortunately, *1-3 John* is, at times, a cumbersome read. The author-date method, in which the listing of the author's surname, year of publication, and page number(s) is employed (i.e. Fitzmyer 1992: 58), affects readability and distracts the reader. This, however, is a design issue.

Without dispute, Yarbrough interprets syntactical, lexical, theological, and translational issues with great skill. There are, however, two minor disappointments. The first involves his interaction with English translations, which for the most part is invaluable. In fact, his examination of translations is quite impressive (KJV, LB, JB, NASB, NEB, NIV, NLT, NRSV, Phillips, RSV, TEV, TNIV). Yet for a commentary of this magnitude, it seems odd that the NET Bible, with its thoroughly documented notes on the Greek text, was not consulted. Second, Yarbrough entertains Martin Culy's suggestion of "Trinitarian ambiguity," that John was "under no compulsion to distinguish between members of Godhead" in 1 John (p. 176 n. 7; p. 223). Yet elsewhere, Yarbrough sees no ambiguity at all (p. 259). Thus it seems to me that if Yarbrough agrees with this seemingly blurred view of the Godhead in 1 John, he might have helpfully developed Culy's brief comment in the introduction to his *1, 2, 3, John: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004).

Without dispute, the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series blends scholarly depth with an adequate degree of readability. Yet "a major purpose is to address the needs of *pastors* and others involved in the preaching and exposition of

the Scriptures" (p. vii, italics mine). Herein lies the Achilles heel of this commentary as well as the series. Naturally, Yarbrough assumes his readers are familiar with Koine Greek. In fact, he handles the Greek text well by interacting with, for example, verb tenses and their respective semantic classifications (iterative force, p. 352; epistolary aorist, pp. 162, 296, 377; etc.). He evaluates noun cases according to their respective categories (pendant nominative, p. 160; subjective or objective genitive, pp. 285, 350; the genitive of subordination, p. 378; etc). Discussions about an inclusio (pp. 271, 277), hendiadys (p. 247), and the elliptical ἵνα (p. 147) are extremely helpful, as are the discussions about the cataphoric article (p. 131), the optative mood (p. 335), the prosaic infinitive (p. 374), genitive absolutes (p. 367), hortatory subjunctives (pp. 159, 247), and the passive voice (pp. 177, 194; etc.). Significant structural markers and crucial terms are not only discussed and handled with critical care, but they are presented in the original language throughout the commentary. Yet, how many pastors can really read this commentary with understanding?

With fewer and fewer seminaries requiring Master of Divinity and/or Master of Theology students to work in the Greek NT, 1-3 *John* seems to assume too much about the capabilities of most contemporary pastors who stand and preach God's word every Sunday. Too few seminary graduates who enter a pastoral ministry are able to evaluate and use effectively a commentary like this. Nevertheless, Yarbrough's commentary is an excellent tool for those seminary students learning exegesis and for those pastors trained in the exegetical method of interpretation. Comparatively speaking, it is a friendlier read than Raymond Brown's *The Epistles of John* in the Anchor Bible series (New York: Doubleday, 1982). Yet pastors with limited or no Greek background in syntax or exegesis are better served by using John Painter's *1, 2, and 3 John* in the Sacra Pagina series (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2002) or Glenn W. Barker's "1, 2, 3 John" in volume twelve of the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981).

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*The Witness of Jesus, Paul and John: An Exploration in Biblical Theology.* By Larry R. Helyer. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008, 432 pp., \$32.00.

This book grows out of twenty-five years of teaching biblical theology to undergraduates at the author's college, Taylor University. The author's intention matches the style and depth with which the audience of the book is addressed (i.e. it is largely for undergraduates in evangelical institutions). Each chapter ends with a set of study/discussion questions and a reading list of twenty or more books and articles. The style is that of a lecture with many first-person references, such as: "In my opinion," "I think," or even "My own tentative conclusions are . . ."

The book's eleven chapters are divided into five parts. Part 1 treats prolegomena. In chapter 1 the book offers defining traits of biblical theology and discusses method. The contrast between evangelical and "liberal protestant" biblical theology is a bit too starkly drawn, as a history of the discipline demonstrates. These days it seems that many of the former distinctions bleed into one another. For example, is Brevard Childs an evangelical or a liberal? It is curious that the book commits itself to doing biblical theology from the whole canon while discussing Jesus (who did not write a book of the Bible) and then only Paul and John. In the end, this book makes it appear as though Paul and John, as authors, sum up biblical, or at least NT, theology. Undergraduates will miss the diversity of the NT witness apparent in Luke and Peter and Hebrews if this

book is their main exposure to NT theology. It is surprising that there is no interaction with Räsänen's *Beyond New Testament Theology* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), since it has had such a wide circulation and influence among NT theologians and sets the stage for discussions of the discipline in the twenty-first century.

Chapter 2 is called "The Problem of the Unity of the Bible." As it turns out the chapter is much more about hermeneutics, ranging in discussion from Origen's allegorical method to James Robison's New Hermeneutic with many stops in between. The chapter ends with a discussion of an evangelical approach to the relationship between the testaments. Chapter 3 rehearses the century-long debate between covenant and dispensational theologies. This debate was discussed in many places in the previous century, and it appears to be on the wane in the middle of the road evangelical circles toward which this book is aimed. For this reason one might wonder about the value of this chapter in a book on NT theology.

Parts 2, 3, and 4 discuss the theologies of Jesus, Paul, and John. The discussion of the theology of Jesus is divided into chapters on Jesus and the kingdom and dominical ethics. The book does not deal with the problems inherent in producing a theology of Jesus from different Gospels but rather suggests other books that deal with these difficulties. The author claims to recognize that one cannot use a simple red letter edition of the Bible to find the theology of Jesus, but this is how the teaching of Jesus is presented. There are very few times that Matthew's or Mark's or Luke's distinctive approaches to the words and works of Jesus are noted. In my experience, this sort of method proves to be a challenge for university students who take Gospels classes with non-evangelical professors at public universities. To flatten the Synoptic Gospels also tends to lose the rich contribution of each book as it presents dominical teaching. The stance taken in the chapter on Jesus and the kingdom is basically a rehashing of George Ladd's influential teaching among evangelicals of the "now and not yet" approach to eschatology. The chapter on the ethics of Jesus is largely an exposition of the Sermon on the Mount. In this chapter there is also a brief discussion of different approaches to biblical ethics.

The discussion of Paul begins with a chapter on prolegomena. One wonders why a chapter is devoted to methods for discovering Pauline theology but not Jesus' theology. The chapter deals with the sources, background, and methodological problems in Pauline theology. This is important information for undergraduates to know as long as they understand that many people no longer ask these questions in the post-modern world. These debates are often carried on among scholars. Nevertheless, answers to the questions raised can often help solidify people's faith. Paul's gospel is the subject of Chapter 7. After discussing the human plight, the chapter examines different metaphors (sacrifice, redemption, reconciliation, victory, and justification) Paul uses to describe the good news of salvation in Christ. The final chapter on Paul discusses Christology and eschatology. Most of the section on Christology is devoted to "Cosmic Christology," which has been a special project of the author for a number of years. His work is brought together here. This is helpful because cosmic Christology is often not a major subject in biblical theology. After a short section on Pauline eschatology, the chapter ends with a short critique of James Dunn's ideal cosmic Christology.

The last major part of the book deals with the theology of John. Chapter 9 is largely devoted to Christology with a short concluding section on Jesus' death as atonement. The chapter notes that John "combines inseparably Christ's person and mission . . . Jesus is a missionary" (p. 313). This idea is subtly developed in the chapter. The second chapter on Johannine theology highlights Johannine eschatology and ecclesiology. The chapter demonstrates that Johannine eschatology is both realized and future in the Gospel, the epistles, and Revelation. The futuristic eschatology of Revelation is summarized in about a dozen pages using the rubrics of "a moderately futuristic approach"