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NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

General Editor: James D. G. Dunn,
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This series provides a programmatic survey of the individual writings of the New Testament. It aims to remedy the deficiency of available published material, which has tended to concentrate on historical, textual, grammatical and literary issues at the expense of the theology, or to lose distinctive emphases of individual writings in systematised studies of 'The Theology of Paul' and the like. New Testament specialists here write at greater length than is usually possible in the introductions to commentaries or as part of other New Testament theologies, and explore the theological themes and issues of their chosen books without being tied to a commentary format, or to a thematic structure drawn from elsewhere. When complete, the series will cover all the New Testament writings, and will thus provide an attractive, and timely, range of texts around which courses can be developed.

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THE THEOLOGY OF
THE
GOSPEL OF JOHN

D. MOODY SMITH

George Washington Ivey Professor of New Testament, Duke University



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*J. Louis Martyn
and
Paul W. Meyer
teachers and friends*

Editor's preface

Although the New Testament is usually taught within Departments or Schools or Faculties of Theology/Divinity/Religion, theological study of the individual New Testament writings is often minimal or at best patchy. The reasons for this are not hard to discern.

For one thing, the traditional style of studying a New Testament document is by means of straight exegesis, often verse by verse. Theological concerns jostle with interesting historical, textual, grammatical and literary issues, often at the cost of the theological. Such exegesis is usually very time-consuming, so that only one or two key writings can be treated in any depth within a crowded three-year syllabus.

For another, there is a marked lack of suitable textbooks round which courses could be developed. Commentaries are likely to lose theological comment within a mass of other detail in the same way as exegetical lectures. The section on the theology of a document in the Introduction to a commentary is often very brief and may do little more than pick out elements within the writing under a sequence of headings drawn from systematic theology. Excursuses usually deal with only one or two selected topics. Likewise larger works on New Testament Theology usually treat Paul's letters as a whole and, having devoted the great bulk of their space to Jesus, Paul and John, can spare only a few pages for others.

In consequence, there is little incentive on the part of teacher or student to engage with a particular New Testament document, and students have to be content with a general overview, at best complemented by in-depth study of (parts of)

two or three New Testament writings. A serious corollary to this is the degree to which students are thereby incapacitated in the task of integrating their New Testament study with the rest of their Theology or Religion courses, since often they are capable only of drawing on the general overview or on a sequence of particular verses treated atomistically. The growing importance of a literary-critical approach to individual documents simply highlights the present deficiencies even more. Having been given little experience in handling individual New Testament writings as such at a theological level, most students are very ill-prepared to develop a properly integrated literary and theological response to particular texts. Ordinands too need more help than they currently receive from textbooks, so that their preaching from particular passages may be better informed theologically.

There is need therefore for a series to bridge the gap between too brief an introduction and too full a commentary where theological discussion is lost among too many other concerns. It is our aim to provide such a series. That is, a series where New Testament specialists are able to write at a greater length on the theology of individual writings than is usually possible in the introductions to commentaries or as part of New Testament Theologies, and to explore the theological themes and issues of these writings without being tied to a commentary format or to a thematic structure provided from elsewhere. The volumes seek both to describe each document's theology, and to engage theologically with it, noting also its canonical context and any specific influence it may have had on the history of Christian faith and life. They are directed at those who already have one or two years of full-time New Testament and theological study behind them.

University of Durham

JAMES D. G. DUNN

Preface

To write the theology of John is a daunting and almost presumptuous undertaking. The evangelist has already written his theology in narrative form. Who are we to rewrite it for him? Moreover, Rudolf Bultmann masterfully set forth the theology of the Gospel and Epistles of John in slightly less than a hundred pages of his *Theology of the New Testament*. Why should we now need more than half that much space again?

The mere fact that John wrote a narrative of Jesus' ministry means that we should ask whether that historic ministry provides the proper, or complete, context or frame for interpreting what he has written. Apart from that ministry his narrative is unthinkable, but, as J. Louis Martyn argued in *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, the narrative operates at two levels, that of Jesus himself and that of the Johannine Christians and community. To elucidate John's theology means not to destroy his narrative, but to show how its theological emphases arose from and relate to the emergence of that Christian community on Martyn's second level.

The length of the book is partly the consequence of its intended audience and pedagogical purpose, but mainly a reflection of our increased knowledge. As John Ashton (*Understanding the Fourth Gospel*) has pointed out, Bultmann did not deal adequately with the question of the historical setting of the Fourth Gospel, particularly as it impinges upon its theology. Yet my own indebtedness to Bultmann, as well as to Martyn, Raymond Brown, and others, should be clear enough. Like Ashton, from whose comprehensive treatment I have learned a great deal, I attempt to bring some of the theological insights of

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Bultmann into conjunction with the work of Martyn and Brown.

This book also reflects the experience of many years teaching the Gospel of John at the Divinity School of Duke University. In an earlier form it was the basis for lectures in courses on the theology of John at Duke (spring semester, 1992) and at Princeton Theological Seminary (summer session, 1992). I am especially grateful to students in those classes for their insightful questions, as well as the encouragement their interest afforded me. This book is dedicated to, and intended for, such students.

Friends and colleagues in the Johannine Seminar of the Society for New Testament Studies, particularly Alan Culpepper, Robert Fortna, Robert Kysar, John Painter, and Fernando Segovia, have kept me aware and abreast of the range of issues to be considered. I am grateful also to a number of other people who in different ways have been of great help: Sarah Freedman, who put my work in its many drafts on disk; Eric Greaux, my graduate assistant, for his careful reading of the typescript; Professor Marianne Meye Thompson, who read the typescript in penultimate form, offering detailed observations and suggestions; and Professor James D. G. Dunn, who invited me to write this volume for the series and offered much constructive advice. Of course, the author alone must assume responsibility for the contents of a book. A sabbatical leave at the Center of Theological Inquiry in Princeton enabled me to write without interruptions, and I once again have the pleasure of thanking the director, Professor Daniel W. Hardy, and his administrative assistant, Kate Le Van, for providing a wonderful place in which to work among good friends and congenial colleagues.

Where I have quoted the Gospel of John or other parts of the New Testament I have offered my own translations, albeit influenced primarily by the RSV, although I do follow the NRSV's use of inclusive language, where appropriate. For such ancient writers as the Apostolic Fathers, Eusebius, and Philo I have used the appropriate volumes of the Loeb Classical Library, and for Justin Martyr and Irenaeus the

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venerable *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. As far as possible, however, I have cited quotations of ancient sources from the accessible collection and translation of C. K. Barrett, *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents* (London and San Francisco, 1987 and 1989), which in a representative way covers the *Umwelt* of the Fourth Gospel admirably. The concluding list of further reading is limited to books available in English. These are the works most likely to be accessible to undergraduates or theological students. Moreover, this seems a reasonable and not altogether arbitrary way of reducing the publications cited in a crowded field.

Abbreviations

<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JSNTSS	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
KJV	King James (Authorized) Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, trans. G. W. Bromiley (9 vols., Grand Rapids, 1964–1974).
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>