Mammon, the resultant status or associated idolatry, but loves God “with his whole property.” We thus have in the Gospel narrative a scribal acquaintance “with the implications, formulations, imagery and contents of the Old Testament texts. He did not only know the texts, he was also familiar with the expositions of them offered by the leading ‘rabbinical’ schools from the beginning of our period” (p. 21).

This last comment indicates an additional contribution of these essays. For Gerhardsson does more than suggest the shared theological insights and traditions. In addition to positive teaching for the Jesus communities, he also considers the apologetic and polemical nature of the narratives in the early period, particularly the intra-Jewish dimension. Importantly, Gerhardsson notes also the close social links with Jewish education and the continuing piety which characterizes the leaders of the first decades of the Church. They still, for example, recited the Shema every morning and evening and ascribed the highest value to “doing the word.” In fact, it is the principle of this insight which Gerhardsson proffers to explain the loss of continuity with this dynamic interpretation in later Christian tradition: once the Christian leaders were removed from this contact with Jewish education and intellectual formation they “reasoned differently and expounded their texts differently, since they were now onesidedly stamped by Greco-Roman forms of intellectual labour” (pp. 11–12). Disappointment surfaces in Gerhardsson’s observation of similar distance in the response (or lack thereof) of his colleagues and invites critical engagement of his ideas. Perhaps this accessible collection will help ensure such a dialogue with these important essays in the future.

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Jones defines a symbol as “a literary device that points beyond itself to something that defies clear and definitive perceptual expression and that in some way embodies that which it represents” (p. 219). As a symbol recurs in a narrative, he explains, it expands
in meaning and that to which it points becomes more clearly defined. Accordingly, the symbol of water in the Gospel of John accumulates meaning as the Gospel progresses. Since Jones examines each appearance of water in the Gospel, moving from first to last, his thesis about the symbolic meaning of water becomes clearer and his argument stronger as the study advances. His interpretations in his second chapter, where he looks at the symbol of water in John 1, 2, and 3, are overstated, while his latter conclusions are more convincing.

Writing in a commentary style, Jones provides a verse by verse exegesis of the narrative sections in which water appears. With each major section, he divides the text into smaller units and sub-units, offers commentary, and concludes with an interpretation of the symbolic meaning of water in that section. Generally, he finds water to symbolize newness and replacement. This meaning comes through clearly in most occurrences. He further concludes that water allows or facilitates an opportunity for characters in the narrative to come to belief. It functions as a call for a decision.

In the first occurrence of water as a symbol (1:19–34), John’s baptism with water is contrasted with Jesus’ superior baptizing “with the Holy Spirit.” And the purpose of John’s water baptism is stated to be that Jesus “might be revealed to Israel.” In the Cana wedding scene (2:1–11), Jesus replaces the waters for Jewish purification with the abundant fine wine associated with the messianic age. This sign reveals Jesus’ glory and brings his disciples to belief. Water is related to replacement and newness in these narratives, but its connection to subsequent belief is indirect at best. It strains the evidence to assert that in 1:19–34, “water heralded the arrival of something new in Judaism” (p. 86). The water of John’s baptism does not herald Jesus’ arrival, John does. And to state that in 2:1–11, “water helped awaken the faith of [Jesus’] disciples” (p. 86), because Jesus’ sign evokes faith in his followers, is to ascribe undue significance to the water used in the sign.

Jones’s interpretation of John 3 is also questionable. In 3:1–21, Nicodemus is told that entrance into God’s kingdom requires that one be “born of water and Spirit” (3:5). Based on his assumption that αὐτό functions epexegetically in this phrase, Jones renders it to mean “born of water, ‘that is to say,’ of spirit” (p. 74), thereby virtually equating water and spirit in this passage. Jones goes on to use the phrase “born of water” synonymously with “born anew.” In contrast to this, Jesus, in his conversation with Nicodemus,