J.R. Michaels ("The Gospel of John as a Kinder, Gentler Apocalypse for the 20th [sic] Century," 191-197) sees the future relevance of the Fourth Gospel in the message of light present within a world that is experienced as darkness. G.R. O'Day ("Johannine Theology as Sectarian Theology," 199-203) sees it in the understanding of Jesus' death as the restoration of relationship between God, Jesus and those who believe in him. L. Schottroff ("Important Aspects of the Gospel for the Future," 205-210) seeks the importance for the future in a responsible way of dealing with the gospel's anti-Judaism, in the liberating power of a martyred Messiah, and in the traditions of women in John. From the point of view of "intercultural criticism," F.F. Segovia ("The Gospel at the Close of the Century: Engagement from the Diaspora," 211-216) appreciates John's view of this world as strange but criticizes the absence of an effort to make it less strange. D.M. Smith ("What Have I Learned about the Gospel of John?" 217-235) informs us of what he has learnt in almost forty years of studying John: the gospel's origin in the conflict with the synagogue, the independence of the gospel and of the community behind it, and the necessity to read it in the context of the NT.

In a concluding chapter ("Reading Readers of the Fourth Gospel and Their Readings: An Exercise in Intercultural Criticism," 237-277), the editor of the volume summarizes the various papers and situates them in a typology of readings. The volume is closed by indices of citations and of authors.

The articles united under the heading "Literary Approaches" (with the exception of Koester's) stand out by much theorizing, while their actual contribution to our understanding of John more or less amounts to stating the obvious. In several papers, the Fourth Gospel is criticized for such traits as its anti-Judaism or its sectarianism. Such criticism may be fully justified from the point of view of a twentieth century reader of John (although it should not be restricted to what is considered as "politically correct"); however, it would be preferable to make a sharper distinction between the historical reality of the Fourth Gospel as a first century Jewish Christian document, and our twentieth century theological reception of it (a distinction that is actually made quite clearly by Culpepper, Schottroff, and Smith).

The editor of "What is John?" considers exegesis in terms of reader constructs and reading strategies. Such terms almost inevitably tend to create an atmosphere of subjectivity; at the same time, one gets the strong impression that at least the large majority of the contributors to this volume, while recognizing that they are interpreting the text from their own point of view, claim to say something real about John's gospel. It seems to me that intersubjective testing of results of exegesis is more promising than mapping reader constructs. After deduction of modish terminology (and of many unnecessary repetitions), there remain valuable elements in "What is John?" that make it an interesting complement of Exploring the Gospel of John.

Utrecht


Except for some minor modifications, Ensor's monograph is identical with the Ph.D. thesis which he submitted to the University of Aberdeen in 1993. "The aim of this book is to investigate the sayings attributed to Jesus in the Fourth Gospel in which he refers to his 'works', 'work' or 'working'. Within this general area special attention will be given to the linkage these sayings have with the ministry of

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the historical Jesus, and, to a lesser extent, to their use in the patristic era” (p. 1).

Ensor starts by surveying the literature relevant to his topic, and by discussing some introductory questions: authorship, sources, and development of the Fourth Gospel. In his view, the gospel was written, in several stages, by an eyewitness or by someone closely associated with an eyewitness; the author made use of sources (but not of the synoptic gospels) and traditions, and the gospel was edited after it left his hands. There is nothing to prevent us thinking that actual words of Jesus have been preserved in John’s gospel.

Next, Ensor addresses the problem of authenticity. He distinguishes three types or levels of authenticity: (a) “the authenticity of the actual original [Aramaic] words of Jesus,” (b) “the authenticity of close Greek translations of the original words of Jesus,” and (c) “the authenticity of words which convey the general content of the original words of Jesus” (32-33). A saying of Jesus possesses an (a) or (b) type of authenticity if it meets the criteria of multiple attestation; of showing Jesus’ language, culture, and personal idiom; of coherence with authentic sayings; of dissimilarity with Judaism and early Christianity; of displaying anti-redactional features. Only the third of these criteria can be used negatively; at the same time, it is a good criterion to discover materials possessing a (c) type of authenticity.

Ensor then looks at John’s accuracy in quoting from the OT, because he thinks it offers a clue to the evangelist’s way of handling the sayings of Jesus. John’s quotations vary between the two extremes of strictly verbal (e.g., 10:34) and very loose (e.g., 7:38), but the evangelist is always loyal to the content of his OT text (MT or LXX). He adds or omits words, he conflates texts, he paraphrases, and interprets from his own theological point of view. According to Ensor, we may expect him to treat the sayings of Jesus in a similar way.

Before dealing with Jesus’ sayings on his “works” in John, Ensor devotes attention to the words ἔργον and ἔργαζομαι, often supposed to belong to the Johannine vocabulary. The terms, in themselves very common, occur within John exclusively in Jesus’ words; this makes Ensor surmise that they belong to Jesus’ own way of speaking. The synoptic gospels, in which Jesus uses the synonymous verb ποιεῖν of himself, do at least not contradict this surmise; besides, the “works”-terminology coheres with the veiled way of speaking of the historical Jesus, and is in tension with the explicit christology of John’s redaction.

The bulk of the book consists in a discussion of the “works”-sayings attributed to Jesus in John. Four chapters are devoted to John 9:3b-4; 4:34 together with 17:4; 5:17; 5:19-20 respectively. The pattern of treatment is as follows: a saying is situated within its Johannine context, its authenticity is discussed on the basis of the criteria mentioned above, and an exegesis of the saying is presented. Each chapter is concluded by a survey of the patristic exegesis of the saying in question. Ensor concludes that Jesus’ sayings in John 9:4; 4:34; 5:17; 5:19-20a possess an authenticity of type (b), whereas those in John 9:3b; 17:4; 5:20b possess an authenticity of type (c). A separate chapter is devoted to the remaining sayings (John 5:36; 10:25, 32, 37-38; 14:10-11; 15:24), which are all considered as authentic on level (c): “… even though these Johannine sayings in their present form cannot be shown to correspond closely to the original words of Jesus they nevertheless express motifs which for the most part can be traced back to him” (255). To these motifs belong Jesus’ filial consciousness and his belief that he had been sent by God to perform a specific task. Here as well, the patristic exegesis is briefly surveyed. The Fathers generally incline to explaining the “works”-sayings as supporting the doctrine of the deity of Christ.

In a final chapter, Ensor summarizes his findings. He draws attention to the facts that the evangelist’s treatment of OT quotations and of Jesus’ “works”-sayings are analogous, and that the Church Fathers further develop John’s christology just as the evangelist further develops Jesus’ “works”-sayings.