

These Things Have Been Written-Studies on the Fourth Gospel. By Raymond F. Collins. Louvain: Peeters, 1990; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991, xiii + 256 pp., n. p.*

This book represents a collection of twelve essays on the fourth gospel. They were originally published between 1976 and 1989 in various journals. The book's title, imitating typical Johannine style, alludes both to the familiar phrase of the fourth evangelist and to the fact that Collins' work represents in fact a reissue of previously published writings.

Collins' central contention is that the fourth gospel originated as a series of homilies that were designed to strengthen the faith of the members of the Johannine community. Following J. L. Martyn's now classic work *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (1968; rev. ed. 1979), Collins contends: "Indeed we really ought to read John's gospel on two levels. At one level, it is a narrative tale. It tells in a simple way . . . the remembered tale of Jesus of Nazareth. . . . On another level, the gospel of John is a symbolic tale. It tells the story of the Johannine community, its faith and its struggles."

In the lead article Collins seeks to show that each original homily selected a particular individual as a type of faith, or lack thereof, in Jesus. Of the fifteen figures he identifies, some fit this pattern better than others. Does only Philip represent "the disciple who misunderstands" in the fourth gospel? Is it accurate to consider Mary as the one who "symbolizes the one who faithfully awaits the messianic times"? It appears that Collins does not tie these contentions sufficiently to the text of John's gospel itself.

In the second part of the collection Collins deals with the genre of the fourth gospel and its relationship to the synoptics. It is there that the author's rather low view of the fourth gospel's final text comes to light when he refers to "the present, somewhat confused state of the Gospel of John" and calls the fourth gospel "the earliest commentary on the gospel" rather than a gospel in its own right.

Collins' collection brings to mind similar efforts by D. M. Smith, M. de Jonge or R. E. Brown. While the essays do not all possess the same depth of insight, they provide some food for thought for the Johannine scholar. The two best articles in my judgment are also the two earliest — "Representative Figures" and "He Came to Dwell Among Us' (John 1:14)" — both originally published in 1976. Though somewhat dated they still make good reading for students of Johannine theology.

It is certainly possible to benefit from some of Collins' detailed observations. His overall interpretational grid of the fourth gospel, however, appears to be on shakier ground. Collins has fully embraced Martyn's version of the Johannine community hypothesis with its hermeneutical entailments. Today, however, even many of Martyn's followers express certain reservations regarding the specific details of his reconstruction, not to mention the recent massive assault launched on the entire hypothesis by M. Hengel (*Die johanneische Frage*, 1993). Collins' essays may therefore soon be regarded more as dated artifacts of a certain species of redaction-critical study in the post-Martyn era than as enduring contributions to the study of John's gospel.

Andreas J. Köstenberger
Briercrest Bible College, Caronport, SK

*This review first appeared in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 38 (1995): 472–73 and is posted with permission.