

The Johannine Literature. By Barnabas Lindars, Ruth B. Edwards, and John M. Court. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000. Pp. 324. ISBN 1-84127-081-4. \$24.95.

The three parts of this book were published individually as entries to the New Testament Guides series. The first part (pp. 30–103), written by Lindars on John, was first published in 1990; the second (pp. 109–203), written by Edwards on the Johannine Epistles, appeared in 1996; and Court's contribution on the Apocalypse (pp. 205–307) was first published in 1994. The three sections are preceded by a lengthy foreword (pp. 9–27) by R. Alan Culpepper, "An Introduction to the Johannine Writings." Because the three sections of this volume were extensively reviewed when they first appeared, what is required here is an assessment of the usefulness of this book when the three parts are bound together.

Culpepper's foreword could easily be read by a first-year seminary student. Its strength is the breadth of useful information put together in easily readable form. What is missing is any sense of the dynamic disagreement among Johannine scholars that drives a fair bit of the current debate, a feeling for the disparate and even competing approaches now on offer.

Each of the three principal sections of the book begins with a selected list of commentaries. These lists have been updated (thus Lindars on John, published in 1990, now includes a commentary published in 1991 and another published in 1995). On the other hand, there is no evidence of substantive interaction with literature produced later than the original date of publication, except for a brief "Further Reading" note at the end of each chapter.

The first and third authors (Lindars and Court) tend to advance their respective positions, well known from other works, as the given understanding of their respective Johannine corpora. Edwards tends to report more options—occasionally giving all of them so much credit that it is not entirely clear how students will avoid some confusion. On issues relating to the opponents in 1 John, for instance, she does not rule out the existence of some kind of Gnostics, but she sides with Judith Lieu, Dietmar Neufeld, and others in downplaying the polemical content of the book. Court's section is the most ideologically driven, with strong emphasis on reader-response theory, sociological interpretations, images of empire, and the wide acceptance of pluralism in method. I would have most difficulty assigning this section of the book as an adequate "introduction" for students: it is an excellent introduction to Court on Revelation, but not to Revelation, or to the broader stream of contemporary studies on Revelation.

This is not a book for scholars. College and seminary libraries that do not already have the relevant NTG volumes on their shelves should buy this one. It could provide collateral reading for some courses but is no better than standard introductions, and less thorough than the introductions in the major commentaries.