

Edward W. Klink III. *The Sheep of the Fold: The Audience and Origin of the Gospel of John*. SNTSMS 141. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pp. 316. ISBN: 978-0-521-87582-0. \$101.00 cloth.

The published form of a doctoral dissertation defended at the University of St. Andrews in 2005, this book is an extension of Richard Bauckham's thesis ("For Whom Were the Gospels Written?" in *The Gospels for All Christians* [ed. R. Bauckham; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989]) that the canonical Gospels were written not for well-defined local Christian audiences or networks of "communities" but for Christians everywhere in the late-first-century Roman Empire. Klink's focus is on the Fourth Gospel, but he views his work as a "test case" by which the overthrow of the community hypothesis that "shackles" study of all four canonical Gospels becomes warranted. The primary title of the book is misleading; there is very little on John 10. It is the subtitle that comes closer to telling the reader what Klink is tackling.

After a first chapter detailing the origins of the Gospel community hypotheses and outlining his own methods, Klink devotes a long chapter to determining what might be meant by "community." If community is understood not geographically but relationally, then the Gospels' intended and potential audience is greatly enlarged. Sectarian models of community turn out to be too limiting; they cannot finally be squared with the textual evidence. Moreover, the work of Margaret Mitchell has demonstrated that although the patristic writers show themselves to be much interested in the origin, including the place of origin, of the Gospels, they nowhere assume that a determination of this sort sanctions assumptions about the limited geographical locus of the document's sphere of influence. The fathers were much more interested in un-

covering traditions that tied the Gospels to the apostles than in delineating communities.

In his third chapter, Klink examines the genre of a canonical Gospel. In line with the work of Richard Burridge, he concludes that the closest parallel is the Greco-Roman biographies. Although they could be used in "sectarian" contexts, their normal use was "broader dissemination." Moreover, the "two levels" reading of John, presented at its most forceful in the work of J. Louis Martyn, would simply not have been taken on board by the first readers. Martyn's initial entry point, his insistence on anachronism in 9:22, is not, historically speaking, very secure—and John himself repeatedly and forcefully draws a distinction between what Jesus' followers understood "back then" (in the days of Jesus' ministry before the cross) and in John's present, so precisely what warrant is there for thinking that John obliterates his own distinction in chaps. 5 and 9? Reflections of this sort significantly reduce the credibility of any community hypothesis.

Klink devotes his fourth chapter to teasing out the identity of the intended audience by sifting what might reasonably be inferred as one tries to identify the implied reader. He notes, for instance, that the reader has some knowledge of key figures but not a lot—and no knowledge of others. Similarly, the readers have some basic knowledge of the relevant geography but must have some things explained to them; they are speakers and readers of Greek, and some Jewish titles and words are explained. These and many similar features (e.g., the fact that the Beloved Disciple has to be introduced to the readers) drive Klink to the conclusion that John is writing not for a close-knit sectarian community with tight links with the author but for readers who have some basic exposure to who Jesus is but who need to learn a great deal more. This "more" is unpacked in the fifth chapter. Klink argues that the Fourth Gospel displays a very wide variety of authorial *Tendenzen*, which suggests that John assumes a diverse audience with many different characteristics and needs. Even some of the most dramatic representative figures in John (Klink focuses particular attention on Nicodemus in John 3 and the Samaritan woman in John 4) attest the breadth of his interests. All this is much more plausible if one assumes an intended general readership rather than a constrained community with narrowly-defined theological focuses of interest. Klink's final brief chapter summarizes his argument and drives home his thesis.

The book is well organized and well written. The main thesis is not new, of course, but many more books of this sort will be needed to undermine the community paradigm which, though it is not quite as controlling as it was, still exerts far more influence than it deserves. As usual, one may quibble with details. Klink ought to allow more space in his understanding of the function of the Fourth Gospel for evangelism of Greek-speaking Jews, proselytes, and God-fearers. Moreover, it is surely more than a little surprising that, in a book aimed at delineating the "audience" and "origin" of the Gospel of John, nothing is said about the identity of the author.

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