

Great Planet Earth, referred to on p. 33 (Lindsey's *The Terminal Generation* is listed in the bibliography, however, on p. 203). Incidentally, Lindsey's name is misspelled "Lindsay" in each of several occurrences in the book (pp. 33, 155, 203).

On the whole Erb's presentation provides a useful tool for the lay person in providing brief answers to many of the varied questions relating to "Bible Prophecy." It is generally balanced, as already noted; but caution must be exercised to recognize where there is actual scriptural and historical support for the positions taken and where the matter is one merely of the author's own interpretation.

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Harvey, A. E. *Jesus on Trial: A Study of the Fourth Gospel*. Atlanta: John Knox, 1977. vii + 140 pp. \$6.95.

The thesis of this interesting work on the Fourth Gospel is that it is "a presentation of the claims of Jesus in the form of an extended trial" (p. 17). Harvey sets forth his case by first pointing out the problem caused by the condemnation of Jesus. One might question the verdict of a Roman court, but Jesus was also tried before a Jewish court and in the eyes of the Jews the presumption would be that the latter was correct. The Synoptics imply that the Jewish court was corrupt rather than that Jesus was guilty. But John instead lets the reader decide for himself by setting forth before him the charges of the accusers and the defense of the accused in a series of different situations.

To support his contention, the author first attempts to show that the Gospel writer deliberately used legal terms in pointing to judicial witnesses necessary for a legal procedure. Since the important thing was not the facts as such but the credibility of the witnesses, these last had to be chosen with the view of their being trusted by the readers. Thus John the Baptist is the first witness. John is not only a credible but early witness. The Fourth Gospel is distinctive in not identifying John with Elijah but simply identifying him as a voice, according to Harvey, "a speaker giving evidence" (p. 28).

The early disciples are also witnesses. Among them is Nathanael, who is specifically called an Israelite (not a Jew), and one without guile — "and this, of course, is precisely what is required of a reliable witness" (p. 36). Judas is called a *diabolos* which really refers to a slanderer, an adversary, i.e., one who gives a negative witness. The statement in John 18:5, "Judas who betrayed him stood with them," is compared with Zech 3:1, with emphasis upon "standing." Harvey's conclusion is that "here Judas, by 'standing' with Jesus' enemies, identifies himself again as *diabolos*" (p. 38). The witnesses of beings from another world also are added to these in their witness of Jesus as "the Holy One."

In regard to legal procedures, the author mentions three. The first is that a trial does not need to take place before a formally constituted court, the second that the line between witness and judge was not always clear and that the chief concern was not the facts themselves but the reliability of the witness, and third that there could be in some cases only one witness. Harvey intends to show by these procedures that what takes place in the Gospel of John is not just a dispute between Jesus and his adversaries but indeed, in a full sense of the word, a legal procedure since all three factors mentioned above apply to the situations described in John. Especially emphasized is the third of the factors, in that Jesus claims the Father as witness that he is unique and authoritative. Such a claim would be considered blasphemous if false; but if true, it would lead to condemnation of those who would reject it, so that those

who were judging Jesus would themselves be judged. Harvey also reviews the trial scenes in the Synoptics, pointing out differences and similarities, but is obviously more interested in the latter. While not explicit, what he wants to show is that the Synoptics agree with John. We are not forced to conclude, he says, that they depict a formally constituted Jewish trial, but the issues are the same: healing on the Sabbath and the claims of Jesus.

He finds the charges in John, however, to be more specific. In the Synoptics, what Jesus does on the Sabbath is controversial but nothing that could have been specifically brought before a court; in John they are acts that are explicitly prohibited by the Mishnah: carrying a bed and making a paste. Regarding the charge of blasphemy, the Synoptics mention this only at the trial at the end, but John mentions no fewer than five incidents where this charge is directed toward Jesus.

Jesus' defense to these charges was that he was acting in God's name. He was God's Son and had authority to serve as God's agent. He could also support his case by the miracles, which are considered signs. A difference from the Synoptics is the fact that in John miracles evoke belief while in the Synoptics miracle is the result of belief.

The verdict of the Jewish and Roman court regarding Jesus was guilty; but John, unlike the Synoptics who imply that the verdict was wrong because the procedures were wrong, seeks to show that the procedures were correct but the verdict was wrong. John has already shown how this was so, but another way in which the reader can also be shown this is by the evidence of Jesus' followers. Up to this point, John has presented the case of Jesus publicly, but beginning with chap. 13 he shows that those who received Jesus would be his witnesses. As Jesus was the Father's agent, so now the disciples must become Jesus' agents. But in this work they would have the assistance of a *paraclete*. There was no place for such a one in Jewish legal procedure, but the idea is taken from an imagined trial and judgment before God. Good deeds or angels or perfectly righteous people could serve as advocates. An advocate refers to a person "who would appear in court to lend the weight of his influence and prestige to the case of his friend, to convince the judges of his probity, and to seek to secure a favourable verdict" (p. 109). Not Jesus Christ in heaven as in 1 John 2:1, but the Holy Spirit on earth, is the advocate here. The Spirit will come to the aid of the witness of Jesus and counter-accuse those who accuse him.

After presenting the foregoing thesis, Harvey seeks in his last chapter to bring out some of the implications of this study on critical problems regarding the Gospel.

The question at issue in regard to the thesis of this book is not whether the accounts in John are set forth to lead the reader to believe in Jesus or whether they are set forth in the format of controversy and dispute with charges, counter-charges, and defense. Rather, the question is whether John has actually, deliberately, and specifically used a legal model in the form of actual trials. The arguments in Harvey's chapter on witnesses appear forced, especially what is said concerning Nathanael and Judas. The chapter dealing with the verdict does not make a convincing case that the reader must also hear the evidence of Jesus' followers, since their evidence as such is not provided in the last chapters of the Gospel. That Jesus deals and speaks more privately to his apostles is not in question; what is in question is that these chapters constitute the witness of Jesus' followers.

The verdict of this reviewer is that the author has not proved his case, though there is much of interest and profit that can be derived from the book, especially information regarding Jewish legal procedures.