

best theory to date that reconciles the biblical evidence with the extra-biblical sources, but it should be recognized as only a theory—and one that also requires the assumption of some scribal errors in the biblical text—and it may eventually be proven wrong (I will discuss it in more detail in my forthcoming commentary on 2 Kings). Cogan should, however, be commended for focusing on historical arguments against the theory, rather than simply dismissing it on the basis that some “biblicists” (73) like it. In the end, Cogan is correct that a complete consensus has yet to be achieved. Nevertheless, the fact that not everyone will agree does not detract from the value of this book. It is an important contribution to the study of Sennacherib’s third western campaign and its reception history.

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TARSEE LI

Lamb, David A. *Text, Context and the Johannine Community. A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the Johannine Writings*. London/New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014. 231 pp. Hardcover, £59,99.

The author David A. Lamb is a Church of England vicar, a tutor for ministerial training, and an honorary research fellow at the University of Manchester, UK. This book is a summary of the findings of his doctoral dissertation. With the help of sociolinguistics, his aim is to explore a relationship between the written text of Johannine writings and their social situation. With this research Lamb wants to understand how scholars have come from the Johannine texts to the thesis of a sectarian Johannine community behind the text. Contrary to the prevailing view, his conclusion is that the social situation that the text of Johannine writings presupposes does not support a sectarian Johannine community separated from the mainstream Christianity.

Since R. Alan Culpepper’s *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (1983) there has not been such a penetrating study emphasizing literary aspects of the text and the need to move away from the diachronic to a synchronic approach. With his synchronic approach Lamb emphasizes the text in its final form and calls for reading it as it now stands. Lamb argues against the fragmentary nature of the fourth Gospel and at the same time against the Johannine community hypothesis in which and for which this Gospel was supposedly composed.

After the introduction, Lamb starts in chapter two with the works of Raymond Brown (1966 and 1970), whose research established the Johannine community hypothesis as a generally accepted starting point for historical-critical research on the Johannine writings. Lamb’s main concern is to find out how Brown moves from the text to a social context. His conclusion is that Brown’s hypothesis about the Johannine community rests on a number of presuppositions, and not on clear textual evidences.

In chapter three Lamb introduces his own terms and concepts from the field of sociolinguistics, which he later uses in his own research of the Johannine texts. He emphasizes register analysis of the Johannine texts,

which he believes will offer some insights into the context of the situation of the original readers. He believes that “the Johannine writings would be strange forms of text if they betrayed nothing of their social context, and one benefit of the application of register analysis is that it provides a way of looking at such writings that highlights their character as social and functional documents” (205).

With chapter four Lamb analyzes works of recent sociological commentators such as Meeks, Malina, Petersen, Neyrey, Rohrbaugh, Esler, and others. It turns out that they start with two basic assumptions: 1) There is a community behind Johannine writings. 2) That community is separated from the wider society. They concentrate on the concept of anti-language, which sets the Johannine community up as a small sectarian group separated from mainstream Christianity. Lamb doubts that there is a real anti-language in the Johannine writings. He says that “these scholars have not in fact started with the text and then moved via register theory to a context. Rather, the context of a situation, that of a narrow sectarian group, was already there as part of their paradigm: all that needed to be done was to fit John’s (anti) language to that paradigm.” (199)

So in chapter five Lamb presents his own sociolinguistic research, concentrating on the register-theory analysis of the Johannine texts for the purpose of discovering the details of the social context to which the texts were primarily directed. He deals with narrative passages and focuses specifically “in the case of the Gospel of John, on the so-called narrative asides as those passages most likely to shed light on the context of the situation of the author and intended readership, and in particular those asides where the narrator’s role in relation to the text and/or the reader is highlighted” (146-147). His conclusion is that the text does not give evidence of a close contact between the author and his readers, which implies that the Gospel of John was not written for a close-knit community of which the author was a part. Thus, this gospel has a more general purpose, to bring outsiders to faith, and narrative asides with their explanations to the readers are means to that purpose.

In chapter six Lamb summarizes his conclusions, stating that his register analysis does not support a sectarian group behind the Johannine writings. In Lamb’s own words: “the author had little or no personal knowledge of his intended readers and it certainly does not support the idea of a closed community as its audience. It seems much more probable that a broad readership with some knowledge of Jesus’ ministry was anticipated” (204). Thus, the purpose of the Gospel of John is reaching a wider audience, even though Lamb would not deny that the author belonged to some community of Christians, or even to a loose network implied by the Johannine epistles. But a thesis of a sectarian group on the margins of Christianity being behind the production of the Gospel of John is strongly denied by Lamb as a result of his sociolinguistic research.

Lamb applies a reputable methodology examining first of all the rise of the Johannine community hypothesis (ch. 2), clearly presenting his own methodology (ch. 3), examining works of others who claimed sociological

approach (ch. 4), and finally performing his own sociolinguistic research, approaching the social context of the Johannine writings via register analysis. Such an approach seems fruitful, and his conclusions (ch. 6) are sound. In Lamb's own words, "The main relevance of sociolinguistics to this study is in its analysis of how speech (spoken and written) varies according to situation and the contribution of a theory of register in helping to establish the context of a particular text" (60). Established context speaks strongly against the Johannine community hypothesis as adopted and promoted by today's mainstream scholarship.

With this conclusion his voice in the current scholarship needs to be heard. Long-held assumptions and resulting hypotheses will need to be reconsidered. Johannine writings do not need to be seen any more as sectarian writings produced by a group located on the margins of mainstream Christianity, but need to be fitted into the mainstream picture of the New Testament. Thus, if properly heard by the scholarly community, Lamb's work has a potential to change and redirect current scholarship on Johannine writings. If his work is taken seriously, that could indeed mean the death of the Johannine community hypothesis.

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Lederach, J. P. *Reconcile: Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians*. Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2014. 191 pp. Paperback, \$14.99.

This revised and updated edition, *Reconcile: Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians*, was first published by Herald Press in 1999 under the title, *The Journey Toward Reconciliation*. Lederach writes of conflict and reconciliation out of 30 years of experience as a peace negotiator in many of the major hotspots of war and strife in the span of our planet. He clearly acknowledges the Anabaptist pacifist influence of his Mennonite religious heritage on his work and philosophy as a conflict mediator. He serves as "professor of international peacebuilding and director of the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame [. . .] and is the founding director of the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia" (191).

Lederach cites the work of James Laue (1979) and Ronald Krayhill (1980) as the primary and most influential sources for his work. The book contains an extensive resource section that includes tools, books, biographies, films, etc., that may contribute to the reader's understanding and application of concepts presented, but there is no formal bibliography outside of this resource section.

The book effectively weaves the author's experience and testimony, academic understanding, and actual narratives of conflict intervention and efforts at reconciliation into a finished fabric of literature that held my attention throughout. The introduction of his purpose for writing the book brought forth the expectation of discovering the spiritual foundations of