

instance understand the Matthean material in the context of the historical ministry of Jesus, and then only secondarily within Matthew's own context. Wilson works with a strong presumption that what we find in Matthew is true of the historical Jesus and can, therefore, be used to correct and supplement Borg's portrayal of the historical Jesus. While there is nothing unreasonable about Wilson's approach here, it will cause readers of a more critical bent to become dismissive from this point on. The main strength of Wilson's work is in its study of the narrative portrayal within Matthew, and not in his contribution to historical Jesus studies.

The next chapter justifies the choice of Mt 21-25 as the narrative unit and sets this unit into its larger context in the Gospel. The suitability of the narrative unit is well defended and the larger Gospel context helpfully outlined.

The next two chapters provide the body of the work. First a chapter on 'Jesus the Judge in Matthew: As Prophet' and then one on 'Jesus the Judge in Matthew: As Sage' (note the choice of Borg's favoured categories). Pretty much all the material in Mt 21-25 is taken to be related to the theme of judgement, but on the basis of whether the materials have a more natural fit with an image of Jesus as a prophet or with Jesus as a sage, they are allocated to the respective chapters.

Wilson argues that Jesus fits but transcends prophetic categories and that there is something of judgement in all the prophetic materials. What is perhaps the major weakness of the study is the breadth of what Wilson sweeps into his picture of Jesus as judge. Some careful attention to what might be meant by considering Jesus as judge might have strengthened the work considerably. As it is, judgement as making critical judgements, judging as prophesying future judgement and (especially in the sage chapter) judging as sitting as a judge are all juxtaposed with little attention to the differences (differentiation begins to surface in the conclusion). Wilson follows the Caird, Borg, Wright stream, with its non-literal interpretation of apocalyptic language, up to a point, but does not believe that all of the language can be handled in this way. He argues that the focus of Mt 24 is on the coming judgement on Jerusalem up to v. 35, but that from v. 36 attention shifts to the final eschatological coming of the Son of Man. For this reviewer the difficulty is in the need to find a non-eschatological sense in v. 30 after conceding that v. 27 is eschatological in reference.

Wilson needs somewhat less space to deal with Jesus as sage. He goes for a quite broad definition of what should be allowed to count as sapiential, while admitting that precise boundaries are impossible. Wilson argues that there is a place for judgement in the sapiential. His case would be stronger if he was more attentive to the range of things that he bundles together as dealing with judgement (see above). But the major thrust of this chapter is incontrovertible: in the parables and other materials using images in Mt 24-25 Jesus not only proclaims judgement but also represents himself as destined to be

the final judge of humanity. The relationship between this and the historical Jesus will, nonetheless, continue to be variously judged.

Wilson offers a useful study of the material of Mt 21-25 focussed on the correlation of these materials with the images of prophet and sage, with both figures taking a significant role in relation to judgement, in various ways in which judgement might be understood. It offers a challenge to portraits of the historical Jesus that neglect or partly neglect this broadly attested aspect of the Gospel portrayal of Jesus.

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*John (Blackwell Bible commentaries)*

**Mark Edwards**

Oxford: Blackwell, 2004, xiv + 242 pp., £19.99, pb,  
ISBN 0-631-22907-8

*The Gospel of John: a commentary (2 vols.)*

**Craig S. Keener**

Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003, xlviii + 1636 pp.,  
\$79.95, hb, ISBN 1-56563-378-4

*John (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)*

**Andreas J. Köstenberger**

Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004, xx + 700 pp., £19.99, hb,  
ISBN 0-8010-2644-X

**SUMMARY**

This review introduces three new commentaries on John's Gospel. Keener's is very elaborate and useful for scholars and students. Köstenberger's is also large but more attuned to pastors although not easy to read. These two are reliable guides. On the other hand, Edwards offers no full commentary but a digest of what has been written on John which an evangelical pastor could only use with great care.

**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG**

Diese Rezension stellt drei neue Kommentare zum Johannesevangelium vor. Derjenige von Keener ist sehr ausführlich und Gelehrten wie Studenten von Nutzen. Köstenbergers Kommentar ist ebenfalls umfangreich, aber eher auf Pastoren ausgerichtet, obwohl er nicht leicht zu lesen ist. Diese beiden Kommentare sind verlässliche Führer. Edwards hingegen bietet keinen kompletten Kommentar an, sondern einen Auszug aus der Literatur zum Johannesevangelium, den ein evangelikaler Pastor nur sehr bedachtsam benutzen kann.

**RÉSUMÉ**

Cette recension présente trois nouveaux commentaires sur l'évangile de Jean. Celui de Keener est très développé et utile pour les spécialistes et les étudiants. Celui de



Köstenberger est aussi volumineux mais s'adresse davantage aux pasteurs, quoiqu'il ne soit pas toujours facile à lire. Ce sont deux outils fiables. Par contre, Edwards ne nous livre pas un commentaire complet, mais une présentation de ce qui a été écrit sur le quatrième évangile qui ne peut être utilisée par un pasteur évangélique sans beaucoup de précautions.

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Recent years have seen the publication of a number of evangelical commentaries on the Fourth Gospel in English. During the last ten years we received the second edition of G.R. Beasley Murray's *Word Commentary*, Gerald Borchert's two volumes in the New American Commentary, Gary Burge's *NIV Application Commentary*, Clinton Arnold's, a volume together with Acts in *Zondervan illustrated Bible backgrounds commentary*, from Colin Kruse the successor to the volume by Tasker in the *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, Herman Ridderbos' theological commentary translated from the Dutch, and Rodney A. Whitacre's volume in the *IVP New Testament Commentary* series. The present article means to present the two latest additions to this long list together with one other commentary and also to discuss Mark Edward's recent Blackwell commentary.

Keener's is the longest of them all, surpassing R.E. Brown's two Anchor Bible volumes and being second in length only to Rudolf Schnackenburg's four volumes. He uses a massive 330 pages for the introduction alone which covers the following topics: genre and historical character (a 50-page essay on ancient historiography), the discourses, authorship, and context. He then discusses elements of the theology of the Gospel such as revelatory motifs, miracles and Christology. Among the new ideas the author launches is that the use of the word 'Jews' is ironic throughout; on this basis he suggests that translations should print this word in quotation marks. Keener focuses on the text as it stands and on its socio-historical context, not on its origins or on its application. In the description of the alleged and real backgrounds of John's Gospel he shows encyclopaedic knowledge and he carefully demolishes several longstanding theories. However, only advanced students will want so much detail in a commentary. No pastor is going to need, for example, ten pages on the methodology of studying rabbinic sources!

Another 400 pages are taken up by indexes and bibliography so that some 900 pages are left for the commentary proper. Chapter 1 gets 125 some pages and chapter 14 some 60, but 17 only gets 15 and 21 a mere 24.

Keener had already published commentaries on Matthew and Revelation, and in 2005 a commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians appeared. His previous publications marked him out as evangelical although he is not advertised as such. In this commentary he refers to conservative scholars as though he is not one himself, but I find his conclusions on the origins and the reliability of the Gospel nicely conservative. This mammoth commentary

is very legible and it should be in every library; no serious student can afford to ignore it. A slight disadvantage is that the text was completed in 1997 and that later publications are missing.

Compared to Keener's, Köstenberger's commentary looks medium-sized but its length still far surpasses that of many others and is on a par with Barrett, Ridderbos and Carson's *Pillar Commentary*. As in the other volumes of the Baker series, the introduction is very brief, a mere 18 pages this time. The last 100 pages are taken up by the bibliography and the indexes.

Köstenberger unashamedly believes in inerrancy (6) but he pays remarkably little attention to the possibility that the Gospel originated pre-AD 70. The authorship of John the apostle is upheld but the argumentation in favour of it is very brief; as with many other issues, Köstenberger refers the reader to other publications. He would probably agree largely with the important book by Charles E. Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) which appeared at the same time as his own book. Interesting is his suggestion that Jesus' long farewell discourse is the equivalent of Moses' discourse in Deuteronomy.

In a way this is a commentary on the Greek text, but Köstenberger's own translation is printed – which is often close to the NRSV – while the NIV is at the back of his mind and is sometimes commented upon (see at 1:15 and 3:1). At the beginning of each passage we find an introduction which already states its key elements and its message; at the end of the expositions there are no conclusions or applications. The arguments can be fairly technical and although the Greek is transliterated and translated, knowledge of it is useful in order to profit from this commentary.

A couple of characteristics limit the user-friendliness of Köstenberger's work. There are simply too many references to other commentators. The book contains both footnotes and references within the running text, which makes reading a bit tedious. At the end of each passage some 'additional notes' appear with more technical information; being short they should have been integrated into the main exegesis. Many sentences are long and interrupted by messages in brackets; sometimes square brackets are used for interruptions at a second level. This is a commentary packed with facts but it is not very accessible to ministers or to those for whom English is not the first language.

Another point of criticism is that despite the length of the book it is somewhat incomplete. I already said that the author often expects the reader to refer to other publications. Moreover, several things are missing such as:

- A discussion of the number of signs. Köstenberger presumes that there are seven signs in the Gospel (9, 89) but he never argues his case.
- Attention to literary form. The author acknowledges the literary artistry of the evangelist but he pays little attention to it. When he does, he uses the label chiasm for a concentric structure.



- A discussion of John's use of the word 'sign' over against the word 'miracle' as used by the other evangelists.
- Attention to the (potential) offensiveness of texts such as 8:44. The issue of anti-Judaism is ignored.

In conclusion it can be said that this is a sound evangelical commentary which is not very user-friendly.

Mark Edwards' book is totally different. It is not a traditional commentary but a digest of comments and reflections by previous readers. The material covered will overlap with that in the IVP series *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (to which Edwards himself contributed the volume on Galatians–Philippians), but in the present volume Edwards also looks at medieval and modern-critical sources, including composers and British poets. He shows great erudition; yet the resulting mishmash of opinions is not a complete commentary but a series of jottings from all times and places.

According to the editors, the Blackwell series is based on the idea that the history of the interpretation of a text is just as important as its original meaning (ix). Edwards would seem to disagree for in his brief 'Introduction' he is far from uncritical regarding the material he has collected. The said introduction gives an account of his choices and it is also a very condensed history of the interpretation of John's Gospel which is only understandable for those who already know what Edwards is talking about. The author apparently lives in a world without evangelicals for although he purports to cover "the best of modern historical research" he manages to ignore Morris, Smalley, Carson and Blomberg (*The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel*, Leicester: Apollos, 2001), to name just a few. Instead he quotes Swedenborg, C. G. Jung, and Robert Taylor for whom the Gospel was an allegory of the zodiac. No wonder that in the acknowledgements Edwards warns the reader to be prepared for 'a great deal that seems to us tangential, false, misleading or bizarre'.

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### ***Waiting for Antichrist: Charisma and Apocalypse in a Pentecostal Church***

**Damian Thompson**

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, 216 pp., h/b., £26.99, ISBN: 0-19-517856-4.

#### **SUMMARY**

A sociological study of millenarian and other eschatological views held in the congregation of Kensington Temple, one of London's largest Pentecostal churches. This book gives an interesting insight into the sociological study of contemporary religion and religious phenomena.

#### **ZUSAMMENFASSUNG**

Eine soziologische Studie von millenaristischen und anderen eschatologischen Ansichten, die in Kensington Temple

vertreten werden, einer der größten Pfingstgemeinden in London. Dieses Buch liefert einen interessanten Einblick in die soziologische Untersuchung zeitgenössischer Religion und religiöser Phänomene.

#### **RÉSUMÉ**

Voici une étude sociologique des opinions eschatologiques, notamment millénaristes, adoptées dans l'Église de Kensington Temple, l'une des Églises pentecôtistes les plus importantes de Londres. Ce livre nous donne un aperçu intéressant des études sociologiques sur les religions contemporaines et les phénomènes religieux.

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This book is an examination of eschatological beliefs at the turn of the millennium in Kensington Temple, a pentecostal church in London. The author utilises field research and interprets matters from a sociological perspective. The study is introduced in chapter one. In chapter two, Thompson discusses why people choose to believe in a millenarian belief from the perspective of sub-cultural deviance, rational choice theory and disconfirmation by experiment. The third chapter discusses Pentecostalism's relation to eschatology, noting some aspects of its historical development with its move towards routinization and institutionalisation, and its (especially present) diversity and differences from such views as dispensationalism and fundamentalism. The fourth chapter describes and analyses the organisation and charismatic theology of Kensington Temple. The fifth chapter looks into the varieties of millenarian belief in Kensington Temple based on a questionnaire. The sixth chapter makes a few case studies of strong millenarian believers in the congregation, analyses the psychology of these people in the context of their beliefs, and attempts to relate millenarian belief to demographic factors. The seventh chapter analyses how the leaders and the congregation of the Kensington Temple related to the change of the millennium some five years ago. The final chapter draws the study together. Thompson concludes that there is a diversity of millenarian belief in the congregation, and most people do not consider it a factor that directly affects them. For Thompson, the marginalisation of such belief is an aspect of secularisation, or a pull towards the societal consensus in the modern world.

The main strength of the book is its application of sociological analysis. This provides many insights into the study of religion, and the overall thesis has much to contribute to our understanding. However, it can be asked whether a particular sociological theory can explain everything. For example, one could ask whether a possible conviction about the correctness of an issue can always be tied in to a concept of rational choice (Thompson in essence follows rational choice theory), and this has a direct link, for example, to people's experience of the divine and a resulting ethical conviction and action even at great personal cost (such action based on