

Richard Horsley and Tom Thatcher. *John, Jesus, and the Renewal of Israel*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013. 201 pages. \$15.48.

As the title indicates, this book analyzes the Gospel of John as a source for the historical Jesus. The authors argue that the fourth Gospel portrays Jesus' mission as a movement to mobilize the people of Israel against the rulers of Israel, who had political and economical hegemony around the temple in Jerusalem under the rule of the Roman Empire in the first century.

Having designated John as "a spiritual Gospel," historical Jesus studies have been mainly focused on the Synoptics. However, by using both of literary criticism and historical analysis of socio-political conflicts in Roman Palestine, the authors demonstrate that the Gospel "tells a historical story." Horsley and Thatcher contend that Jesus' activities are inseparable from the political movement that tried to bring a renewal to people's political-religious lives by bringing together Israel's entire heritage: the Galileans, the Judeans, and the Samaritans.

Rather than studying the historical Jesus by focusing on sayings, episodes, and theological statements of the past, this project approaches John's Gospel as one whole, orally performed story of antiquity. A series of episodes are viewed as fundamental components that create the overarching story. For example, turning water into wine and healing a royal official's son are signs of people trusting in Jesus in Galilee. The act of cleansing the temple depicts Jesus' attack on the exploitation of the people for the benefit of the ruling elite in Jerusalem. Jesus' meeting with the woman at Jacob's well in Sychar is a "pointed inclusion of the Samaritan version of popular Israelite tradition in Jesus' renewal of all Israel." The temple, claimed by the Judean rulers as the only legitimate place of worship, is said by Jesus to be just "a temporary, historical institution." To worship "in spirit and truth," without any centralized institution, is the ultimate way to tear down the walls between Judeans and Samaritans and bring all of Jacob's children together. The authors of this book remind readers that Passover, which had originally been a celebration of exodus from Egyptian rule once was concentrated in households, but became centralized in Jerusalem, which resulted in exploitation. Jesus' action of feeding the multitude in the wilderness at Passover not only served to reject temple politics, but also to substitute the Passover festival for a popular alternative celebration in the countryside. Healings on Sabbath in pools of purification, one at Bethesda (5:1-9) and another at Siloam (9:1-7), were also Jesus' acts of repudiation of Judean law and its enforcers. John's Jesus claims that his life-giving work supersedes Judean law and his authority is given by his Father (5:22; 9:39).

Other Gospels describe Jesus' activities of healings and exorcisms primarily in Galilee and nearby areas and present his confrontation with the high priest and scribes in Jerusalem at the end. However, John's Gospel not only presents Jesus confronting the temple and its rulers in Jerusalem from the outset, but it also depicts him as a spokesperson, in all aspects of everyday life, for "a popular movement of renewal in opposition to the rulers of Judea and their Roman overlords." That supposed opposition was also the reason for Jesus' crucifixion by the Romans, which the writers argue is clearly described in John's Gospel but remains somewhat unclear in other Gospels.

Scholars, students, and preachers will appreciate this interdisciplinary work not just because of the new findings in Johannine research, but also because of the rich historical non-biblical resources that this book brings into the discussion. Even though the authors cautiously mention this work of searching for the historical Jesus in the fourth Gospel as a "new" and "provisional exploration" recognizing the value of many other approaches, this book gives

readers like me more than enough reason to recommend it to my colleagues and students. I hope I can see more similar work in the future.

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