

THE JOHANNINE QUESTION by Martin Hengel. *SCM Press*, London 1989. Pp. 240. £10.50.

Concerned with the consistency and authorship of the Johannine Corpus this book is based on a series of lectures given at British, Irish and American universities in 1985 and 1987. It is published in its present form whilst a fuller and more expanded version is still in preparation, and it would seem to suffer badly from all the weaknesses of this approach. A thin text occupying just over half the total volume is heavily larded—indeed so heavily larded as to make it in effect very nearly unreadable—with notes which contain not only scholarly apparatus but a considerable amount of discursive and speculative matter relevant to the full understanding of the text. Presumably all this is eventually to be incorporated into the fuller version. The publishers (we are told that this was at their insistence) could hardly have presented us with this material in a more unsatisfactory form.

The author is what one might call a modern traditionalist who continually warns us against the dangers of speculation based but little on the factual realities involved, a feature which has characterised so much the scholarship on this subject during the last hundred years; and yet he operates, when he actually does, effectively within the mode of critical study developed during that time. He proceeds, in his effort to establish the history and origins of the corpus, rather like Sherlock Holmes examining the clues through his classical magnifying glass—though without quite the flair and vision of that great sleuth—or at least he proceeds like this, to considerable effect, until he actually comes to examine the authorship of the Fourth Gospel. Whether it is due to audience boredom during the original lectures or a case of a professor crossing the boundary between his specialist knowledge and his not as yet worked-out ideas I do not know, but at this point the argument becomes assertive and conjectural whilst almost totally lacking any critical expertise. He even uses an analysis (well, sort of) of the literary style of Susan Sontag (!) to argue about the composition and authorship of the Gospel (pp. 96f). It is surely significant that throughout this section the footnotes almost totally disappear.

Professor Hengel argues (at times very convincingly) for a radical unity in the corpus and particularly the Gospel (though he hardly mentions the problem of the Apocalypse and its relation to the 'School' in general.) He presents us, as many have done in more recent scholarship, with a figure—*ho presbyteros*—not only at the centre of the Johannine School at Ephesus, but who, in extreme old age, is also effectively the sole author, one whose knowledge and understanding of Christ goes right back to personal contact and familiarity with Jesus. And yet the whole question—surely, under these circumstances, a tricky and difficult one—of whether this person could or could not have been one of the sons of Zebedee is dismissed in a line and a half solely on the basis of Papias' report about the killing of the *sons* (sic) of Zebedee by the Jews known to us only through the fifth-century Church history of Philip Sidetes (p. 21 and footnote 100 to p. 108) Apart from the complete departure from actual engagement with the texts throughout this section (Ch. 4) the main inadequacy is a lack of sufficient attention to or emphasis upon the 'School' being in all probability also a praying and liturgical community, although he

does make occasional reference to what might have been read as 'scripture' at their 'services'. In the final chapter (ch. 5), however, there is once again some quality, though not necessarily convincing, material with regard to the relationship between John the Elder (*ho presbyteros*) and 'the Beloved Disciple'. It hardly redeems the work, however.

Along with the generally unsatisfactory presentation of the author's material a few niggling points continuously add to the oppression. Why, for example, throughout the text, are nearly, though *not quite all*, the numerous Greek quotations transliterated into Roman (Italic actually), whereas for the most part (but again not always) throughout the footnotes they are presented in Greek script? Why does the author consistently use CE rather than AD in all his dates? Is it a hang-over from his being Professor of Early Judaism as well as New Testament (irrelevant with regard to the present work, I should have thought), or is he trying to be 'modernist and progressive' (something which he fairly frequently criticises in others) in relation to the fact that Jesus was probably born about or even earlier than BC 5 (or should I, to be pedantic, say 5 BCE)? In the attempt by a committed Christian to determine the nature of the living presence of the risen Christ within the Church, roughly between AD 60 and 150, it produces, to the present writer's mind, an extraordinarily discordant effect, though one not out of character with so much of the way in which this work is presented.

An altogether far from satisfactory contribution to Johannine studies.

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REASON, RELIGION AND THE ANIMALS by Basil Wrighton. *Catholic Study Circle for Animal Welfare*. 1987. Pp. 101. Available from CSCAW, c/o Mrs M. Bocking, 39 Onslow Gardens, South Woodford, London E18 1ND.

Father Basil Wrighton was a parish priest who spent most of his life in Staffordshire and Oxfordshire, retiring in 1976 to Hendred House, where he was given a flat and use of the Eyston family's 13th century chapel in which he celebrated Holy Mass daily until his death in 1988 at the age of 88. He had a working knowledge of 15–20 languages, was steeped in classical learning and wrote, over more than half a century, scores of articles for many Catholic journals, some defunct, some still published. These include articles on Christian philosophy and theology, on Kierkegaard and Newman, on Eastern religion, on modernism, and many pieces on the rights of animals. These latter, most of which have already appeared in *The Ark*, the magazine of CSCAW, have recently been collected and published as a single volume.

Such a volume is greatly to be welcomed as a valuable contribution to the hardly-explored intellectual territory of Christian philosophy concerning the rights of God's nonhuman creatures. Fr. Wrighton expresses his debt to the earlier work of Dom Ambrose Agius, and many of us are familiar with the recent work of the Anglican theologian Andrew Linzey. But there is much to be done, especially by Catholic thinkers, in systematising the philosophy of animal rights (or of our moral obligations toward animals, if rights talk be objected to). In *Reason, Religion and the Animals* we have Fr. Wrighton's chief writings on the subject arranged in chronological order, beginning with his 1950 piece 'The True Civilization', in which he laments