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Urban, Christina

Das Menschenbild nach dem Johannesevangelium

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Andreas J. Köstenberger
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary
Wake Forest, NC 27587

The present volume represents a slightly edited version of the author's doctoral dissertation completed under the supervision of the German scholar Jürgen Becker. Part 1 takes its point of departure from—who else?—Rudolf Bultmann and Ernst Käsemann. After a discussion of Johannine misunderstandings and a comparison of Johannine and gnostic language, one finds a fairly lengthy theoretical chapter on linguistic approaches to John's Gospel. A critical discussion of Josef Blank's treatment of Johannine anthropology concludes part 1. Part 2 is devoted to an analysis of three Johannine texts: 1:35–51; 4:1–42; and 8:21–59.

The author, taking her cue from Bultmann, states at the outset her conviction that John's Gospel has a "dual center," whose two major themes, God/Christ and anthropology, ought to be interpreted with reference to one another. The primary underlying assumption of this monograph is that access to Johannine anthropology is found in the human ability to communicate (*Sprachhaftigkeit*). Specifically, the author distinguishes between language *in* and the language *of* John's Gospel (for her purposes the former is judged critical). Urban's thesis is bound up with the characteristic *vagueness* of language, borne out particularly by the Johannine misunderstandings.

The essential function of language in John's Gospel is the portrayal of a foundational human characteristic, that of understanding or nonunderstanding. This antithesis constitutes a basic anthropological dualism (*anthropologischer Grunddualismus*). Relevant texts, all serving to proceduralize (*Prozessualisierung*) vagueness, are classified according to their outcome: understanding (e.g., 1:35–51; 6:67–71; 9:1–41), misunderstanding (8:21–59; 10:22–39; 12:20–36), or open-endedness (3:1–21; 4:1–42). While the categorization of the latter two narratives may surprise, Urban argues plausibly that their ultimate outcome remains open.

The first passage, 1:35–51, resolves vagueness by moving from seeking (1:38) to finding (1:41, 45 [223]). The second pericope, 4:1–42, proceeds from Jesus' identity as a Jew (4:9) to that of prophet (4:19), Messiah/Christ (4:25, 29), and Savior of the world (4:42 [289]). The third narrative, 8:21–59, defines Jesus' preexistence (8:24) vis-à-vis Abraham (8:58) over against the charges of being a Samaritan and demon-possessed (435). In each instance initial vagueness is followed by an interpretive conflict, which leads to an explicating dialogue, issuing in a positive or negative resolution or leaving the issue open-ended.

This overall framework is a significant tool for understanding Johannine anthropology in that the vagueness characteristic of human existence can be overcome only by divine revelation mediated through the Son, who also brings people into relationship with God and one another. Inherent in the human limited condition is also the possibility of a new beginning (*Neukonstituierung*). The anthropological triad, that is, the question regarding humanity's origin, condition, and destiny, is addressed by John in terms of becoming God's children by way of "in" terminology. Conversely, a person is "of oneself" and thus outside of the orbit of Father and Son.

Why, then, does Jesus utilize vagueness as a starting point for his dialogues in John's Gospel? He does this to teach his conversation partners that they can penetrate to a knowledge of the Son and of God only through a Spirit-effected understanding of the verbal self-revelation of the Son, while at the same time helping them to realize their own inability and limitations. The processualization of vagueness serves the purpose of uncovering the human deficit of self-effected understanding, thus promoting a sense of need for the divine revelation mediated in the Fourth Gospel through the Son.

Thus the Gospel starts with the human inability to understand, a function of human sinfulness as well as natural limitations, and then proceeds to the possibility of understanding divine revelation through the Son and by the Spirit. A person's response to Jesus' word determines whether that person experiences a change in her condition or whether she remains in her sinful state and separation from God. The dialogues between

Jesus and his respective conversation partners in John's Gospel serve to crystallize this dynamic and issue in one of the three above-mentioned possible outcomes.

Overall, this monograph offers an interesting and thorough exploration of Johannine anthropology. Readers patient enough to wade through the first 170 pages of rather tedious technical methodological discussion are rewarded with an often-enlightening discussion. The categories employed by the author hold significant promise for the further exploration of the Gospel, though one wonders if at times modern constructs are weighted too heavily in relation to first-century ones. Nevertheless, Urban is to be commended for providing an anthropological synthesis that makes a significant contribution to further study of this issue.