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CURRENT SCHOLARSHIP ON THE
JOHANNINE EPISTLES

Edited by

R. Alan Culpepper and Paul N. Anderson

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>4 Regn.</i>	Dio Chrysostom, <i>De regno iv</i> (Or. 4)
AB	Anchor Bible
<i>Abr.</i>	Philo, <i>De Abrahamo</i>
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
ACNT	Augsburg Commentaries on the New Testament
AcTSup	Acta Theologica Supplementum
<i>Agr.</i>	Philo, <i>De agricultura</i>
AJEC	Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity
<i>Alex.</i>	<i>Ad Alexandrinos</i> (Or. 32)
<i>Amic.</i>	Cicero, <i>De amicitia</i>
AMP	Amplified Bible
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
<i>Andr.</i>	Euripides, <i>Andromache</i>
ANF	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
<i>Ant.</i>	Josephus, <i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
ASV	American Standard Version
BBE	Bible in Basic English
BDAG	Bauer, Walter, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
BDF	Blass, Friedrich, Albert Debrunner, and Robert W. Funk. <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
BHT	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
<i>BibLeb</i>	<i>Bibel und Leben</i>

BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i>
BK	<i>Bibel und Kirche</i>
BL	<i>Bibel und Liturgie</i>
BR	<i>Biblical Research</i>
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BWA(N)T	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten (und Neuen) Testament
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CCSL	<i>Christianorum: Series latina</i>
CEB	Contemporary English Bible
CEV	Contemporary English Version
<i>Cher.</i>	Philo, <i>De cherubim</i>
<i>Contempl.</i>	Philo, <i>De vita contemplativa</i>
<i>Decal.</i>	Philo, <i>De decalogo</i>
<i>Deus</i>	Philo, <i>Quod Deus sit immutabilis</i>
<i>Diatr.</i>	Epictetus, <i>Diatribai</i>
Did.	Didache
<i>DivThom</i>	<i>Divus Thomas</i>
ECC	Eerdmans Critical Commentary
EDNT	<i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990–1993.
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>Eph.</i>	Ignatius, <i>To the Ephesians</i>
<i>Epigr.</i>	Martial, <i>Epigrammaton libri</i>
<i>Ep. Tra.</i>	Pliny the Younger, <i>Epistulae ad Trajanum</i>
ERV	English Revised Version
ESV	English Standard Version
<i>Eth. eud.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Ethica eudemia</i>
<i>Eth. nic.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Ethica nichomachea</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>Flacc.</i>	Philo, <i>In Flaccum</i>
FM	<i>Faith and Mission</i>

frg.	fragment
<i>Fug.</i>	Philo, <i>De fuga et inventione</i>
GNT	Good News Translation
<i>Haer.</i>	Irenaeus, <i>Adversus haereses</i>
<i>HBT</i>	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
<i>Herm. Mand.</i>	Shepherd of Hermas, <i>Mandate</i>
<i>Hist.</i>	Thucydides, <i>History of the Peloponnesian War</i>
<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	<i>Historia ecclesiastica</i>
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HNTC	Harper's New Testament Commentaries
HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
HUT	Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie
Hyp. Arch.	Nag Hammadi Codices II 4, Hypostasis of the Archons
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplement Series
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha: Supplement Series
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (Meyer-Kommentar)
KJV	King James Version
LB	The Living Bible
<i>Leg.</i>	Plato, <i>Leges</i>
<i>Legat.</i>	Philo, <i>Legatio ad Gaium</i>
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
<i>Lys.</i>	Plato, <i>Lysis</i>
<i>Magn.</i>	Ignatius, <i>To the Magnesians</i>
<i>Mart. Pol.</i>	<i>Martyrdom of Polycarp</i>
MNTC	Moffatt New Testament Commentary
<i>Met.</i>	Apuleius, <i>Metamorphosis</i>

<i>Metaph.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Metaphysica</i>
<i>Mor.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Moralia</i>
<i>Mos.</i>	Philo, <i>De vita Mosis</i>
NAB	New American Bible
NAC	New American Commentary
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NCB	New Century Bible
NCV	New Century Version
NEB	New English Bible
NET	New English Translation
<i>NIB</i>	<i>New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
NIBCNT	New International Biblical Commentary on the New Testament
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NJKV	New King James Version
NLT	New Living Translation
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplements
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
NTL	New Testament Library
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>Opif.</i>	Philo, <i>De opificio mundi</i>
<i>Orest.</i>	Euripides, <i>Orestes</i>
ÖTK	Ökumenischer Taschenbuch-Kommentar
<i>Phaedr.</i>	Plato, <i>Phaedrus</i>
<i>Phil</i>	Polycarp, <i>To the Philippians</i>
<i>Phld.</i>	Ignatius, <i>To the Philadelphians</i>
<i>Pol.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Politica</i>
<i>Post.</i>	Philo, <i>De posteritate Caini</i>
<i>Presb</i>	<i>Presbyterion</i>
<i>PRSt</i>	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
QG	Philo, <i>Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesin</i>
REB	Revised English Bible
<i>Res.</i>	Tertullian, <i>Resurrection of the Flesh</i>
<i>Resp.</i>	Plato, <i>Respublica</i>
<i>RevExp</i>	<i>Review and Expositor</i>

RBL	<i>Review of Biblical Literature</i>
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
RSV	Revised Standard Version
Sacr.	Philo, <i>De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLECL	Society of Biblical Literature Early Christianity and Its Literature
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
SJOT	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
Smyrn.	Ignatius, <i>To the Smyrnaeans</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and Its World
Somn.	Philo, <i>De somniis</i>
SP	Sacra Pagina
Spec.	Philo, <i>De specialibus legibus</i>
SR	<i>Studies in Religion</i>
TBT	<i>The Bible Today</i>
TEV	Today's English Version
THKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
TLZ	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TNIV	Today's New International Version
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
Tract. ep. Jo.	<i>In epistulam Johannis ad Parthos tractatus</i>
Trall.	Ignatius, <i>To the Trallians</i>
TRu	<i>Theologische Rundschau</i>
TTS	Theologische Texte und Studien
TUGAL	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
TZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
UBS	United Bible Societies
Unit. eccl.	Cyprian, <i>De catholicae ecclesiae unitate</i>
Vir. Illus.	Cornelius Nepos, <i>De Viris Illustribus</i>
Virt.	Philo, <i>De virtutibus</i>
Vit.	Diogenes Laertius, <i>Lives of Eminent Philosophers</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

WW	<i>Word and World</i>
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentar
ZNT	<i>Zeitschrift für Neues Testament</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

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INTRODUCTION

R. Alan Culpepper and Paul N. Anderson

The Epistles of John involve only seven chapters of the New Testament, but they offer one of the most interesting windows into the life of the early church available, with extensive implications for understanding (and misunderstanding) a host of interpretive issues. First John does not identify its audience, and the author does not introduce himself. The author of 2 John and 3 John refers to himself as “the Elder” (ὁ πρεσβύτερος in Greek). Were all three texts written by the same author? If so, then why the differences in the author’s self-identification? And the audiences of 2 and 3 John are specified as “the elect lady and her children” (2 John 1) and “the beloved Gaius” (3 John 1). Why the differences in declared audiences? Further, there is a considerable difference in length between the letters: the five chapters of 1 John are five times as long as 2 and 3 John combined. How are these facts to be understood and thus interpreted?

Another set of issues emerges also at the start: the relation of the Johannine Epistles to the Johannine Gospel and Apocalypse. While Revelation is the most distinctive among the five Johannine writings (and the only one to assert the name of its author, indirectly and directly: “John,” Rev 1:1, 4, 9; 22:8), its style and form are considerably different from the other Johannine writings. That is why most scholars feel it is safer to leave it out of discussions related to the Gospel and Epistles of John, despite a number of Johannine similarities. The relation of the Gospel to the Epistles of John, however, cannot be ignored, and questions range from which was earlier and later, whether they represent a similar setting, whether their authorship was common, and whether purposes were similar or different. It could even be that a multiplicity of authorial and editorial hands were involved in the production of the Johannine corpus, and such a likelihood is bolstered by the inclusion of first-person plural language (“we,” “us,” and “our”—in the Gospel and the Epistles), raising doubts that

a single individual was responsible for all of these writings or that they were written to the same situation.

As a result, understanding the content of the Johannine Epistles hinges directly upon solid inferences of the contexts in which they were written, the concerns of their authors and editors, the relations of these writings to other contemporary literature (especially the Johannine), and the literary features of each composition. As Raymond Brown has made us aware, while the Johannine “eagle,” representing the elevated perspective of the Fourth Gospel, soars above the ground it surveys, the Johannine Epistles betray eaglets fighting over their place in the nest, with schisms, rejections, embraces, and invective language—all showing a far less tidy portraiture of early Christianity than more romanticized views have allowed.

If the Johannine leadership and its adversaries reflect communities in dispute, however, what about Johannine scholarship over the last several decades? Indeed, as this collection of incisive essays by leading Johannine scholars shows, some points of convergence are evident, but top scholars also take issue with each other as to how this material came together, what was going on within the Johannine situation, and what its content implies for both theological and ethical interpretations of the New Testament. Therefore, today’s “Johannine School”—the international community of Johannine scholars today—also finds itself in dispute about important issues, not simply tangential ones, and this collection of essays throws some of those similarities and differences into sharp relief.

These papers were invited and delivered at the Symposium on the Johannine Epistles at the McAfee School of Theology at Mercer University in Atlanta, Georgia, November 17–19, 2010, and they are gathered into three sections within the present volume. Part 1 deals with “The Relationship between the Gospel and the Epistles”; Part 2 addresses “The Church in the Johannine Epistles”; Part 3 concludes, then, with “The Theology and Ethics of the Epistles.” Alan Culpepper introduces the volume by setting the stage for the conversation, providing terse summaries of the papers’ contributions, and Paul Anderson introduces each section by outlining some of the key issues in each part and concludes with an overview of the collection—moving the discussion forward regarding emerging aspects of consensus as well as continuing, open questions.

So, regarding state-of-the-art discussions of earlier communities in dispute and the texts by which they are illumined ... let the conversation begin!