

Of course, N.'s studies shed much light on *what* the Evangelist expects his readers to believe and why they should believe it, but more discussion of the Evangelist's idea of faith in the context of a synagogue that has rejected Jesus as the Messiah and as the divine Savior from heaven would have deepened our understanding of the dynamics of the Gospel. This brings me to one more point: N. hardly touches on the theme of expulsion from the synagogue, explicitly referenced three times (9:22; 12:42; 16:2). These passages receive some attention (see esp. 66, 69–70), but their explanatory power for much of what is going on in the Fourth Gospel seems underrated. Indeed, the scriptural apologetic, clearly oriented toward a skeptical synagogue, has not been developed.

Whatever the merit of these complaints, they hardly detract from the value of the book. It is rare that a collection of previously published essays exhibits such balance and coherence. N. is to be commended for his excellent contribution to Johannine scholarship.

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REVISITING THE EMPTY TOMB: THE EARLY HISTORY OF EASTER. By Daniel A. Smith. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010. Pp. xi + 267. \$29.

Smith limits himself to (1) exploring both the tradition of Jesus's empty tomb (as he reconstructs its religious background) and the tradition of the postresurrection appearances, and (2) accounting for the differences of perspective between the two traditions. He accounts for the differences by arguing that the empty-tomb tradition did not originate as a way of stating that Jesus had been raised from the dead, but as a "disappearance" tradition or as a way of expressing that Jesus had been assumed from the tomb into heaven and would be seen again at the parousia. He associates the earliest form of the disappearance tradition as he finds it in Mark 16:1–8 with the disappearance of Elijah in 2 Kings 2, even though Elijah, unlike Jesus, had not died and been buried before being assumed.

S. has studied assiduously many ancient texts and modern authors relevant to his argument. He notes significant differences between Jewish accounts of assumption (through which Elijah and others escape from death by being "taken up" with a view to their eschatological functions to come) and Greco-Roman stories. The latter usually involved an apotheosis in which some hero was taken alive into the presence of the gods, or else his spirit ascended while his dead body was buried.

S. recognizes that we have something unique in the case of Jesus: Christian belief involved both resurrection and assumption/ascension. But S. never acknowledges a key difficulty thrown up by the cases he cites of Herakles, Romulus, and other such heroes and heroines. Unlike Jesus (who lived and died shortly before the NT came into existence), they were understood to have lived in a very distant past, and—one can reasonably maintain—most probably never existed at all. A similar

difficulty also affects the way Elijah and other ancient biblical figures might be pressed into service as parallels for the traditions that arose about what happened to Jesus.

S. does not refer to Richard Bauckham's *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (2006), a work that might have qualified his willingness to credit the NT authors and their sources with a "creativity" that could have allowed Mark and/or his sources to fashion an empty-tomb tradition on the basis of a Q saying: "You will not see me." Dealing with this and other texts from the common sayings-source used by Matthew and Luke, S. (like many others) writes of those (in the plural) who compiled Q and speculates about their theology and community life. But surely it is possible that only one individual put Q together, allowing for a single, central viewpoint as with Luke and the other Gospels.

S. offers various helpful insights when treating details in the Easter chapters of Luke and Matthew. But the arguments in favor of his central theme (that, as we move from Mark to John, we see a progressive accommodation of a disappearance/assumption tradition, first found in Mark, to an appearance/resurrection tradition) do not convince. The Greco-Roman material used to support S.'s interpretation of Mark 16:1–8 as a disappearance/assumption story seems largely irrelevant to a Gospel that most scholars interpret against a Jewish background. As we move from Mark to John, we do find a progressive linking, but it is one that links the tradition of discovery of the empty tomb (entailing Jesus's resurrection from the dead) with the tradition of his appearances and the individuals and groups to whom he appeared.

In any case, the central statement in the Easter chapter of Mark is "he has been raised" from the dead (along with "he is going before you into Galilee and there you will see him"), not "he has been taken up into heaven" (and "you will see him again at the parousia"). S. tries hard to explain (or explain away?) Mark's text in favor of his own disappearance/assumption thesis, but the arguments seem contrived.

Some of the page references in the endnotes should be corrected: e.g., n. 26 on p. 215 refers to p. 194 (not to p. 182), and n. 78 on p. 233 refers to p. 211 (not to p. 197).

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THE EARLY CHURCH: HISTORY AND MEMORY. By Josef Lössl. New York: T. & T. Clark, 2010. Pp. viii + 247. \$130; \$29.95.

If you are expecting a straightforward survey of church history, Lössl's book will strike you as strange. Yes, there is a section that might be called a thematic history, but there is more. The book has three parts: an introduction to the history of writing church history and to historiographical problems; a treatment of the matrix of Christianity in Judaism and Greco-Roman religion; and final chapters on early Christian practice, doctrine, and leadership up to the year 500.