



The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple: A Work in Two Editions

Herman C. Waetjen

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There is a general consensus that the Fourth Gospel underwent two editions. But in contrast to all previous efforts to reconstruct these two editions on the basis of source and redaction criticism, Waetjen maintains that these two editions essentially overlap without far-reaching changes. Chapter 1-20 originated within the Jewish community of Alexandria and were addressed to Jews in order to persuade them to "believe into" Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God. The second edition originated when chapter 21 was added and certain revisions were made in chapters 1-20 by an editor in the Christian community of Ephesus in order to present the Gospel to Gentile Christians and perhaps attendantly to legitimate it for canonization. Waetjen examines John's gospel by engaging in a close reading of various units of the Gospel from the perspective of a two-level drama that presents two narrative worlds within the literary structure of the Gospel. Out of his readings of the texts, one of the major and provocative conclusions Waetjen draws is that Lazarus is the Beloved Disciple of Jesus in chapters 1-20. John, the son of Zebedee, is intimated to play the role of the Beloved Disciple not only in chapter 21, but throughout the Gospel. In other words, the editor of chapter 21 has concluded that John (based on the title that the gospel already bears), is the Beloved Disciple and project that backwards from chapter 21 throughout the previous 20 chapters. Waetjen's thorough scholarship and his attention to detail in his original readings challenge traditional readings of John's Gospel, providing fresh insights into the Gospel.

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