

Francisco Lozada Jr, *John: An Introduction and Study Guide. History, Community, and Ideology* (T&T Clark's Study Guides to the New Testament; London Clark – Bloomsbury 2020). Pp. 128. \$ 68.00. ISBN 978-0-5676-9284-9 (hardback).

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Francisco Lozada, Jr. is the Charles Fischer Catholic Professor of New Testament and Latino/a Church Studies at Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University, USA. He holds a doctorate in New Testament and Early Christianity from Vanderbilt University. Dr. Lozada's most recent publications concern a cultural and ideological interpretation while exploring how the Bible is employed and deployed in ethnic/racial communities. His area of interest also covers Johannine's tradition.

The reviewed volume – *John: An Introduction and Study Guide* – was published in the well-known and highly regarded T&T Clark's Study Guides to the New Testament series. This is a very important scientific contribution to the Gospel commentary as the Fourth Gospel study has been missing. This volume is the result of the didactic and scientific work of Dr. Lozada. He aims to study John from a literary and ideological perspective based on a socio-historical orientation. The author holds onto the principle of allowing the text to speak for itself. At the same time, he seeks to understand how to read and interpret the Fourth Gospel in the light of modern people's lives. He also appreciates the way how we write about the past (historiography), because it is important to how we see the future or read John in the future.

We must admit that the author's approach to the text of the Gospel is to update the interpretation of the text. He does not focus mainly on what John (as the author of the Gospel) meant when writing the text. He also does not focus on what the recipients' understanding of the text was back then (readers and listeners). And although he admits that the text speaks for itself, he also questions how to interpret it today. He does it not in isolation from modern people's problems. For example, the author refers to "illegal immigrants." We can say that Dr. Lozada emphasizes the strengthening of the so-called borderline voices – those involved in the dynamics of exclusion and inclusion. This book is the guide to John's

Gospel with a difference. While offering succinct treatments of the main critical issues, it is profoundly committed to uncovering how Johannine interpretation is ideologically shaped by contemporary issues, especially power and identity. Asking about the proper contemporary interpretation of the text of the Fourth Gospel, this question applies to both himself and other scholars.

This commentary on the Gospel of St. John begins with the contents (vii-viii), preface (ix-x) and introduction (pp. 1-8). After the last two, the author gives a bibliography. It does so consistently after all connections are made. The content of the book is very clearly divided into five chapters, followed by a conclusion, a bibliography, author index, biblical index and subject index.

Chapters one (pp. 11-28) and two (pp. 29-54) focus on historical and literary issues. The first part of chapter one focuses on the rooting of John and his historical identity. The author firmly acknowledges that “the role of the interpreter is to paint a picture of what this ancient world looked like, objectively, through the author of John” (p. 11). Regarding the identity of John himself, Lozada thinks that someone (one or more) had a reason to compose the Gospel. We are therefore dealing with a fixed identity that is present in scientific research in general, as well as a fluid identity – in the process of a changing identity that depends on an interpreter. By undertaking an analysis of John’s identity, the author addresses important historical issues, such as authorship, provenance, date, purpose, compositional history. Particularly noteworthy is the last issue, where the author examines Raymond Brown’s suggestion, which claims that John was composed along five stages of development.

In the second chapter we find a division into three parts that refer to the “John’s Literary Background.” They relate to the “Narrative of Unsettlement” in John 1:1-18, the “Narrative of Travel /Crossing” in John 1:19–17:26 and the “Narrative of Resettlement” in John 18:1–21:25.

At the beginning of this chapter, the author gives an important sentence that sheds light on the whole of this part of the book. It says that the past is always written from the present. In this way he shows the reader how much influence it has on understanding John’s relationship. It is because in what the author writes and what sources he uses, it affects his perception of the described reality.

In addition, the author divides the Prologue into three parts: John 1:1-2; 1:3-17; 1:18), showing the temporal, physical and theological identity of the Word (*Logos*). He also points to the special mission of the Word, referring to the dualistic or binary struggle between light and darkness. This mission is particularly important because it reveals a conflict between believers and non-believers (recognizing and not recognizing the Word of God) which is the subject of un-settlement.

The next topic in this chapter is travel/crossing narrative. The author – after other scholars of the Fourth Gospel – distinguishes four stages (cycles) of Jesus’ journey here:

- 1) The First Galilee/Jerusalem Cycle (1:19–3:36). The journey begins in Bethany, continues to Galilee, and then crosses into Jerusalem and ends in the surrounding area of Judea. This journey is directed towards Jerusalem and Jesus is to be recognized as the Savior;
- 2) The Second Galilee/Jerusalem Cycle (4:1–5:47). The second journey is directed first to Galilee, to which Jesus goes through Samaria, and then again to Jerusalem. Dr. Lozada focuses his attention on two people from the fourth and fifth chapter. This is a woman from Samaria and a lame man at the sheep’s pool (Bethsaida);
- 3) The Third Galilee/Jerusalem Journey Cycles (6:1–10:42). In the third cycle of his journey, Jesus travels to Galilee and goes to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (chapter 6). Then he again goes to Jerusalem with his disciples for the Feast of Tabernacles and the second Feast of Passover. In this cycle, the focus of the text remains mainly in the world of beliefs. There is a strong contrast between believers – non-believers, and consequently, there is also an increased threat of violence from “Jews” against Jesus.
- 4) The Fourth and Final Journey to Jerusalem (11:1–17:26). This journey begins in Bethany and ends in Jerusalem where Jesus’s identity results in his death. The author raises here an important topic of the whole dissertation. This applies to recognition, especially when others may recognize who Jesus is. He wants deeply for those who listen to Him and follow Him to recognize Him as the Son of God and the Messiah.

The last theme of this part is the “Narrative of Resettlement.” It concerns the betrayal, arrest, trial, death and burial, and the resurrection of Jesus. Through this journey, the recognition scenes center on Jesus’s identity and how the characters strive and finally manage to recognize Jesus. According to the author: “In today’s globalized and multicultural world where it is important to acknowledge and accept difference, recognition between persons should be reciprocal and equal. However, John’s viewpoint promotes a recognition that is unidirectional and hierarchical. It is a standpoint that is out of sync, I believe, with the root impulse and aim of Christian faith itself” (p. 52).

In chapter three (pp. 55-72) Dr. Lozada focuses on three topics: “Jews” (translation and meaning of *hoi Ioudaioi*); women in the Gospel (the Mother of Jesus, Samaritan Woman, the Adulterous Woman [or the Sexualized Woman], Mary and Martha of Bethany, Mary Magdalene) and “world” (*kosmos*). At the outset, he shows the different approach of biblical scholars to analyzing individuals (and groups) in the Fourth Gospel in relation to their faith/disbelief and the resulting attitudes. Therefore, it is about unambiguity and ambiguity (variability) in

these attitudes. This variation particularly applies to people who are undergoing a process that allows them to come to faith. Basically, according to the author, to understand the characters, they should be interpreted in relation to other people and in relation to Jesus.

The fourth chapter (pp. 73-84) focuses on the analysis of the Prologue. The author shows that in John 1:1-18 the world is divided into the one above us, from which the Word (*Logos*) comes to people and to which he later returns. The world above us is the house from which Jesus comes from the Father to make a kind of journey into the world. It is in this key that Lozada delimitates and builds the composition of the Prologue: the world above (1:1-2), the world below (1:3-17), and back to the world above (1:18).

In the Prologue structure, the author sees a pattern that can be attributed to human migration, including contemporary migration: the movement of leaving a sending place, crossing borders and waters, and establishing a permanent or a temporary commitment to a receiving place.

In conclusion, the author notes a dualistic worldview in the Prologue that sets the boundaries between those who recognize (believe) and those who do not recognize (unbelief). In his opinion “the text gives the impression or suggestion that such division is ‘natural’ or eternal, and this division now frame the rest of the story. Those who believe are privileged for their belief: they are superior over others; they are more powerful than others; and they (man) are given opportunity over others” (p. 83).

The last chapter, number five, (pp. 85-96) the author devotes to the analysis of John 17:1-26, i.e. the prayer of Jesus for unity and for community. This chapter highlights three items: Jesus prays for himself (17:1-5), Jesus prays for His disciples (17:6-19), and Jesus prays for all believers (17:20-26).

While the previous chapter showed a kind of division, it is supposed to show uniting people with God through prayer. The author argues at what important moment Jesus’ prayer takes place. Before His “hour” (death and resurrection) comes, Jesus’ disciples need unification. He came to the world below to show his disciples the same love he received from the Father in the world above. Furthermore, the final prayer of Jesus summarizes many important Johannine ideas of the Gospel: glory, love, determinism, faith, the world, believers/unbelievers, and community.

On pages 97-100, the author places a conclusion which reads: “John, the ‘Maverick’ Gospel – Revisited” . Summarizing the very interesting studies conducted in the reviewed volume, the author focuses on the reference to contemporary problems of the southwestern part of the United States of America, where the proximity of the border with Mexico generates various problems. To find out how much impact this has on the author, it is enough to quote his words: “The Gospel of John is certainly a ‘maverick’ Gospel [...]. A ‘maverick’ can be

viewed not only as an independent, nonconformist, free thinker; it can also be viewed as a trespasser, occupier, or colonizer.”

John: An Introduction and Study Guide is a very absorbing book. This is evidenced by a wide spectrum of topics undertaken. The author traditionally deals with historical and literary issues first, and then moves on to the detailed issues to which he devotes his research. And although the Prologue to the Gospel of John has already been worked on by many, so has been the prayer of Jesus in chapter 17, Dr. Lozada reveals it in a new way. It is clear that his didactic work has a great influence on his scientific work. This certainly affects his interpretation of the biblical text. And it must be admitted that it is very modern and touches on very specific matters. Undoubtedly, the question should be asked whether this is a universal interpretation, since the author refers the local problems. It is to be hoped that many people will benefit from this biblical record and the experience he and his students have. Undoubtedly, the reviewed volume deserves a read. An additional advantage of the book is its numerous bibliographic references for further reading and undertaking your own research on the issues raised here.

