

ongoing importance of these themes among contemporary theologians indicates that Tyconius' dynamic "reception" of 2 Thess 2:3–12 continues in the productive process of the enduring impact of the sacred text across history.

This fine study demonstrates a rich appreciation and application of reception criticism on a grand scale. Kulpa's identification of Tyconius' central and supporting themes in 2 Thess 2:3–12, and their further articulation across what remains of his work, especially the *Liber Regularum* and the *Expositio Apocalypseos*, demonstrates skill and insight. The chapter on the reception of the bipartite nature of much associated with a Christian response to God in contemporary Theology turns regularly to theologians who can be roughly regarded as Augustinian in their world view (e.g., Hans Urs von Balthasar and Joseph Ratzinger). There is little recourse to the Heideggerian/Rahnerian tradition, but that is logical and understandable. Regarded as a Donatist, yet censured by a Donatist council about 380 CE, Tyconius lived in his flesh what he expounded in his writings. Anyone interested in the melting pot of fourth century North Africa and its impact upon subsequent Christian thought and practice should have access to this fine study.

FRANCIS J. MOLONEY, SDB, AM FAHA
Catholic Theological College, University of Divinity

JOHNSON THOMASKUTTY, *The Gospel of John: Contemporary Readings*. (Bangalore: Omega Book World, 2023). Pp. xviii + 284. Hardback. INR ₹800.00.

Indian Christianity is much older than most Australians realise. There is even a stream of Christians that trace their origins back as far as the apostle Thomas; I was taken to one of several claimant sites for his death near Chennai in south India on a visit twenty years ago. This gives Indian theology a depth of history and contextualization that compares well with Western scholarship. The author of this collection of essays, Johnson Thomaskutty, is an emerging Indian theological voice that demands our attention. He certainly brings a different perspective (or should that be "perspectives?") in which an Indian and contemporary context provides provocative lines of thought in response to the Fourth Gospel. Thomaskutty shows strong awareness of recent scholarship on John, the Johannine community, and biblical hermeneutics in a postmodern world (most specifically in Chapter 8 on polyvalent interpretation), but refuses to limit analysis to the "there and then" without due attention to the issues of the "here and now." So the Fourth Gospel is considered in relation to the experience of the Dalit community in India (especially Chapter 9), the challenges of disability (especially Chapter 10), globalization, the recent COVID-19 pandemic (especially

Chapter 6), the status of women, and Indian and Asian spirituality, among other themes. As Thomaskutty himself explains, the approach throughout follows a context-text-context structure: issues are posed from the (Indian or other) context, discussed in relation to the text of the Gospel and then viewed afresh on that basis.

After a Foreword by one of Thomaskutty's colleagues, there is an Introduction that sets out the overall thrust of this book and surveys the content and argument of the following essays, which allows readers to "pick and choose" if they haven't the time or inclination to read everything. Readers are set up to find polyvalent readings, narrative analysis, and discussions of the *Sitz im Leben* of John, as well as discussion of standard topics like the authorship, date and setting of the Gospel, as they read on.

Some of the specific features of the Fourth Gospel that Thomaskutty relates to Asian, and specifically South Asian, culture include the prologue (John 1:1–8) with its philosophical concepts, rhythmical cadence and significant parallels with ancient Hindu writings (8–10), the farewell discourse with its parallels to similar narratives such as Sri Buddha (13), parallels between the Gospel's way of salvation and the three paths to salvation in the *Bhagavad Gita* (22) and the situation of extreme need that can drive Indians to Jesus as Healer (25). Many of the characters in the Gospel resemble people found in Asian societies more than modern Western countries (26–28). John's spirituality also resonates with Asians with its ideas of union with God (28–30). The experience of Indian Christians as a persecuted minority with a special ministry to the poor and downcast is also reflected in the Gospel (31–32).

It is impossible to do justice to all fourteen essays in a book review of this length so I will just highlight a few aspects that interested, challenged, or annoyed this reader.

Thomaskutty frequently returns to implications in The Fourth Gospel for the community in which it was created, showing how this community was radically transformed by their encounter with Jesus. As he says, "The narrative framework of John reflects a two-level drama, on the one hand, it is the story of Jesus, and on the other hand, it is the story of the early Johannine community" (85). For example, "the Jesus Movement was gender-inclusive where men and women enjoyed considerable freedom and exemplified their humanhood with a positive outlook" (84). Some of these insights are worth embracing.

Fresh insights into the Gospel are derived from Indian or contemporary issues; for example, in Chapter 6 the author draws attention to aspects of isolation, elusiveness, distance and cleansing prompted by the COVID-19 experience. Chapter 11 introduces a new interpretative element, at least to this reader, "post-normal" times, reflecting the unprecedented changes we are living through, about which the author comments, "The 4S's, the 3C's and the 3T's of the post-normal times invite us to reframe our faith and praxes with creativity in the

contemporary context” (207). This element is also picked up in Chapter 14 on the resurrection narrative of John 20.

The danger in publishing a collection of previously-published articles is that the standard will be inconsistent and that some repetition will occur that would be smoothed over in a monograph. So, for example, the first few pages of the first two essays are almost identical and the opening page of the first essay has this statement twice: “The Gospel of John is considered as one of the significant writings of the NT that appeals to the South Asian spirituality and ideals in multifarious ways” (1–2; also repeated at the opening of the second essay on 37). Something similar happens in the two chapters on “postnormal times.”

The book ends with a substantial bibliography and an index of modern authors but no index of subjects.

Thomaskutty concludes his second essay with these words about the Fourth Gospel: “Its messages of peace, love, faith-centered life, holistic salvation, and the mission of God have the potential to liberate and transform the societies across the Asian continent. In Asia, a missional hermeneutic that crosses the traditional boundaries of interpretation and builds dialogical bridges between the world of John and that of our own time may be very effective. Such boundary-crossing and bridge-building will enable the Indian readers of John to direct their communities to a ‘third space’ for dialogue” (32).

On the whole this is a very stimulating collection of essays, drawing readers into new insights by asking fresh questions from unfamiliar perspectives.

JON NEWTON

Alphacrucis University College, Melbourne