

Eisenbaum, Matthew Thiessen, or Paula Fredriksen. Second, why were these particular articles chosen for republication? The arrangement of the essays does not manifest an obvious structure—whether chronological or topical—which leaves the reader struggling to discern how the essays hold together. Third, if the goal of the book was simply to assemble “the best of Westerholm,” one wonders whether a different publisher would have been a more suitable option, for surely the price tag will ward off everyone but those with tremendously deep pockets—a rare quality among members of the biblical studies guild. These lingering questions notwithstanding, even those who disagree with Westerholm’s conclusions will find his arguments thoughtful and lucid. Moreover, readers will welcome the announcement that he plans “to devote future research largely to the history of Pauline interpretation” (p. 19). We will all doubtless benefit from the application of his ready mind and winsome pen in this new direction.

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doi: 10.5325/bullbiblrese.28.3.0522

Cornelis Bennema. *Mimesis in the Johannine Literature: A Study in Johannine Ethics*.

Library of New Testament Studies 498. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017. Pp. xiv + 230. ISBN: 978-0-5674-3720-4. \$72.00 cloth.

As the author notes in his preface, various earlier versions of portions of this book were presented at scholarly conferences in 2012–15. Two preliminary studies appeared in *Novum Testamentum* (2014) and in a WUNT volume (2016; (p. 3 n. 12). This volume gathers these various studies united around the theme of *mimesis* (imitation) in the Johannine writings (by which Bennema means the Gospel and Epistles but not Revelation).

As Bennema notes at the outset, perhaps the most popular publication on this topic is Thomas à Kempis’s 15th-century work *The Imitation of Christ*. Toward the end of the 20th century, the rallying cry “What Would Jesus Do?” (WWJD) became popular in North-American evangelical circles. The author chooses to remain agnostic regarding the authorship of both Gospel and Epistles as well as regarding the order in which they were written (which raises the important but unanswered question “*Whose* ethic are we talking about?”).

Bennema notes that some are skeptical regarding the concept of imitation as they perceive it to detract from the Gospel’s focus on the uniqueness

of Christ and the centrality of the redemption he provides (though unfortunately, he summarily dismisses any such concerns at the very outset without ever seriously addressing them). Others, such as Wayne Meeks, have alleged that ethics is altogether absent from John's Gospel (though admittedly this is a rather extreme position).

Bennema credits Ruben Zimmermann and Jan van der Watt, co-authors of *Rethinking the Ethics of John* (2012) to whom he dedicates this work, with the exploration of Johannine ethics, though he believes they failed to identify correctly the center of John's moral thought, which he believes to be *mimesis*. In fact, Bennema notes later that Zimmermann explicitly distances himself from such a notion, contending a "role model Christology should not be confused with a misunderstood *imitatio* ethics" (Zimmermann, "Ethics in the Gospel of John," 73, cited on p. 13).

While a few others have explored the topic previously, the author claims that his is "the first organized study that elucidates the Johannine concept of *mimesis*" (p. 4). Since the *mimesis* word group is virtually absent from John's Gospel and Letters, Bennema argues for the centrality of the idea on a *conceptual* level (see appendix 1, somewhat misleadingly titled "Occurrences of *Mimesis* in the Johannine Literature," pp. 207–9). He says that the Johannine text, not the Greco-Roman background, informs his study.

Chapter 1 is devoted to a survey of previous research. However, the survey is not always to be trusted, as the author paints with an unduly broad brush. A single, ten-line paragraph discusses the 30-year period 1970–2000 (!). My work on the subject is lumped together with sectarian views simply because he focuses on John's love ethic, even though he does so within a context of the Johannine mission motif, which is anything but sectarian. These kinds of inaccuracies do not inspire confidence in the author's fairness in representing the views of others (though hopefully this example is the exception rather than norm).

The author posits the following "working definition" of *mimesis*: "Person B represents or emulates person A in activity or state X [in order to become like person A]." He contends that "believer-Jesus" and "believer-God" are the primary forms of *mimesis* in John's Gospel and Epistles, with the divine Son-Father *mimesis* serving as the underlying paradigm (pp. 25–26; on the author's aim and method, see pp. 26–27).

Bennema explains the lack of attention to Johannine *mimesis* in previous scholarship by the lack of the actual term in the Johannine writings (except for 3 John 11) and the neglect of Johannine ethics until recently. However, he unduly presupposes the validity of his thesis at the outset without sufficiently engaging any objections, which means the entire monograph essentially represents an advocacy piece of his position.

What if scholars did not discover the centrality of *mimesis* in John's writings because the concept is not in fact as central as Bennema contends? If any real and lasting impact on the broader field of Johannine scholarship were to be made, the author should squarely consider and address this possibility. As it stands, the most viable approach continues to be one that finds John's ethic centered in Jesus's "love commandment" (13:34–35) as demonstrated at the footwashing (13:1–20).

This is not to say that Bennema's monograph is entirely without merit. He raises a number of interesting questions and interacts with a broad range of scholarship. If a work is as strong as its main thesis, however, the jury is still out as to whether Bennema has proven his point. At least to my mind, after everything is said and done, the case for *mimesis* as central in Johannine thought remains rather weak, though I'm sure that there will be some who will be more receptive to this novel proposal.

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doi: 10.5325/bullbiblrese.28.3.0524