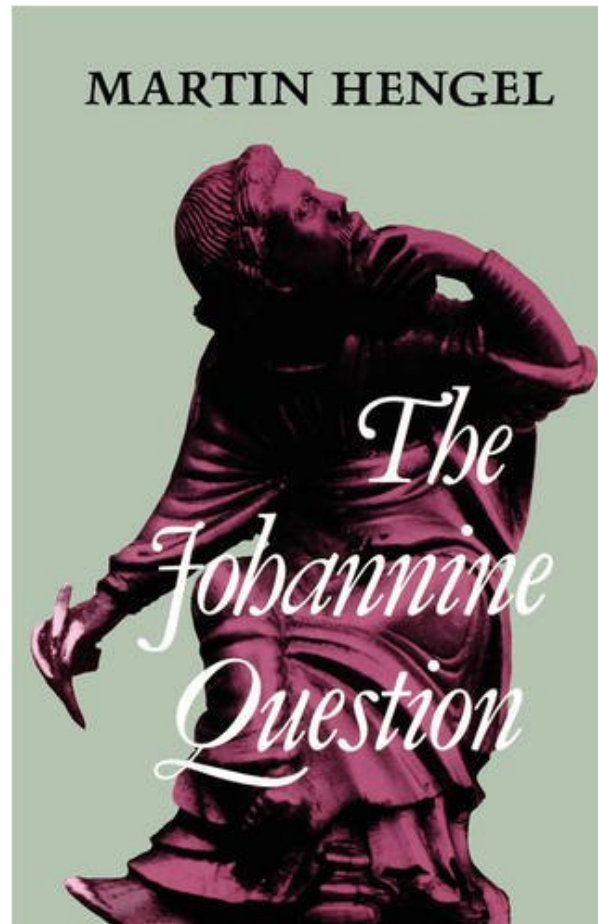


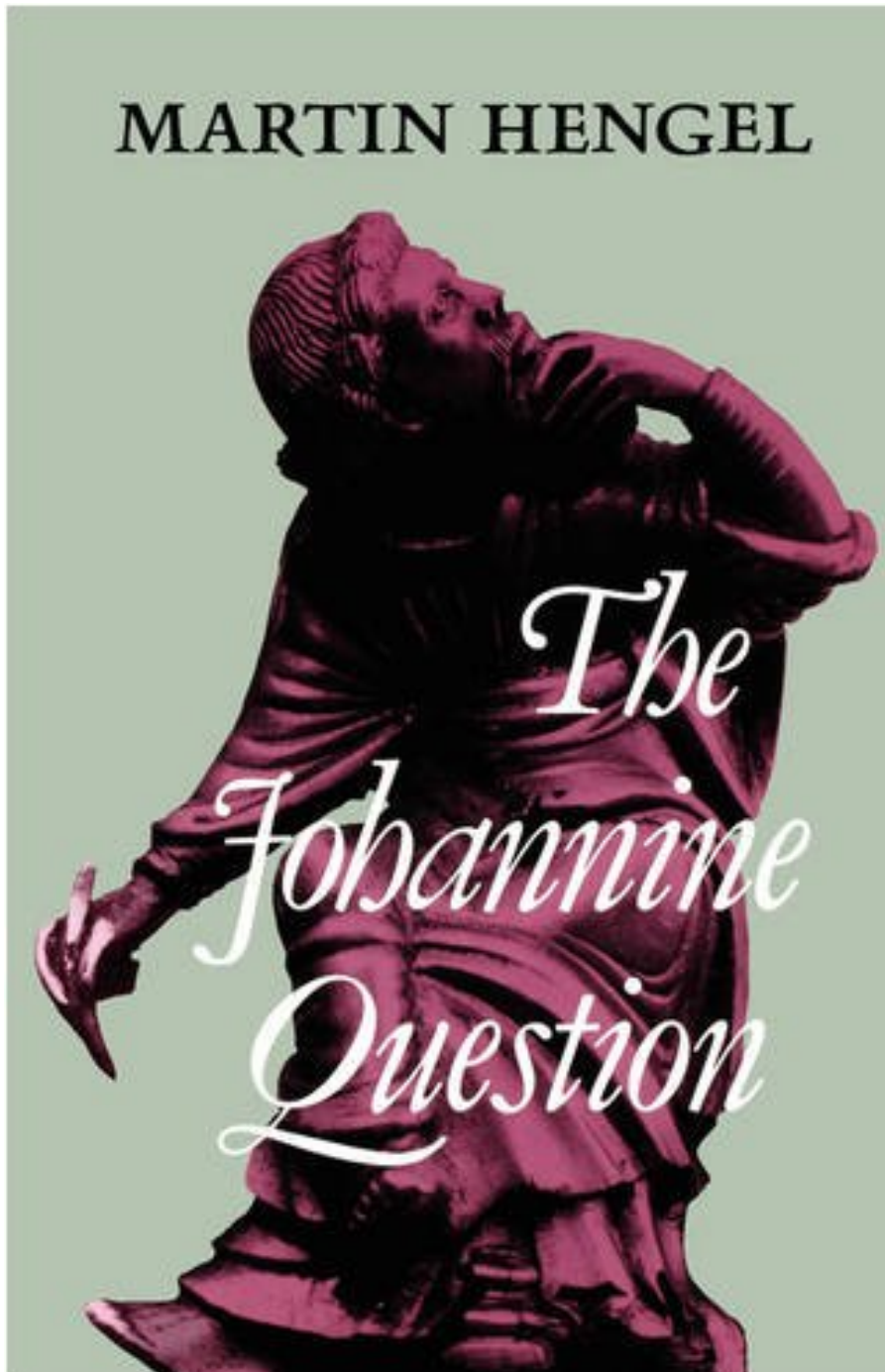
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Martin Hengel was Professor Emeritus of New Testament and Early Judaism at the University of Tubingen in Germany until his death in 2009.

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Characteristically scholarly examination of the origin and authorship of the Fourth Gospel, within the context of the community to which it relates. Skilful detective work traces the trail back to a figure who witnessed the death of Jesus in Jerusalem.

- Sales Rank: #1501618 in Books
- Brand: Brand: SCM Press
- Published on: 1990-03-01
- Format: International Edition
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.50" h x 13.25" w x 5.50" l, .67 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 260 pages

Features

- Used Book in Good Condition

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Orthodox biblical scholarship

By Jeri

Martin Hengel is one of the most famous of biblical scholars, and the "Johannine Question" sums up his findings on the gospel of John.

Some of the more interesting points he makes: The title 'euangelion kata ioannen...was not given at a later date' (P 74) to the gospel. On the contrary. "Its early origin follows from a lack of any variant titles...these facts make a later transference very improbable...Not only the letter and the Apocalypse, but also the gospel, were connected with John of Ephesus from the beginning" (P 74).

He gives an explanation of how the gospel was spread, and, unlike many other scholars today, he argues for a "lively exchange between the leading communities...when the four earliest gospels were circulated" (P 75).

I was especially struck by the numerous historical details Hengel found. And by the fact that the gospel is written in a koine Greek with a marked semitic, even Hebraic flavor, a feature "which is also typical of the

Apocalypse" (P 110). There are huge similarities between the Greek John uses and the Qumran documents, as well as the newly edited Samaritan sources like Memar Marqua.

A pity this isn't more widely available.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

WAS "JOHN THE ELDER," NOT THE APOSTLE JOHN, THE AUTHOR OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL?

By Steven H Propp

Martin Hengel (1926-2009) was a German historian of religion who taught at the University of Tübingen, specializing in the "Second Temple Period" or "Hellenistic Period" of early Judaism and Christianity. He wrote other books such as *Crucifixion, Between Jesus and Paul*, *The Son of God: The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion*, etc.

He wrote in the Preface to this 1989 book, "This book... is based on the five Stone Lectures which I gave at Princeton Theological Seminary in autumn 1987... The English text ... has been expanded at a number of points... behind it lies a substantially more extensive German manuscript which has yet to be published... The basic thesis presented in the lectures clearly goes against many views which are popular today. Among other things, I believe that the broad witness ... of Christian writers of the second century to the Johannine corpus or the Fourth Gospel deserves more attention than it is usually given... Furthermore, it seems to me unmistakable that the Gospel and the letters are not the expression of a community with many voices, but above all the voice of a towering theologian, the founder and head of the Johannine school. We need to be interested in his theological thought, which is quite equal to that of Paul..."

He says of the "beloved disciple": "The identification of this disciple, who at the end of the Gospel is introduced as the author of the work, with any particular well-known figure among the disciples of Jesus in the Gospel itself, is persistently avoided. He appears for the first time only in the nocturnal farewell discourse less than a day before the death of Jesus; and even in the additional chapter 21... a clear characterization is deliberately made impossible by the reference to the anonymous 'other two of his disciples' (21.2). The reason for this mysterious procedure is difficult to explain. If the disciples of the school knew his name as a matter of course why did they keep it (half)-secret from the other communities to which copies of the Gospel were sent? Had the editors wanted definitely to designate him the son of Zebedee known as the second disciple after Peter, this would easily have been possible. There must be deeper reasons why they leave the question open in an ambiguous way. I need not go further into the other attempts at identification from the Gospel itself: Lazarus; Nathanael, Thomas, or even outsiders like John Mark, Paul or a brother of Jesus." (Pg. 77-78)

He says, "we can make a provisional assessment. Behind the 'Johannine community' and the Johannine corpus, letters, Gospel (and Apocalypse) there is one head, an outstanding teacher who founded a school which existed between about 60 or 70 and 100/110 in Asia Minor and developed a considerable activity extending beyond the region and who---as an outsider---claimed to have been a disciple of Jesus, indeed---in the view of the school---a disciple of quite special kind. This teacher... must have attained an extremely great age and therefore was known as 'the elder' in the school and the communities connected with it... The school itself, however, seems quickly to have dissolved; there is no indication that there was a further succession of heads after the elder... Its rapid disintegration also makes it very improbable that the 'elder' founded a separate church of his own." (Pg. 80-81)

He observes, "This brings us back to the figure of the 'beloved disciple,' who indeed appears only on Jesus' last day, and then again in the last appearance in Galilee. At least the editors associated him with the author of the Gospel, i.e., in my view with John the 'Elder.' From him, standing as he does closest to Jesus in an

ideal way and as the more successful 'rival' of Peter, the idiosyncratically 'wholly other' Fourth Gospel takes on its authority, which is meant to make it superior to the Synoptic-Petrine Gospels and their Jesus tradition. It seeks to see the 'history' of Jesus better... and at the same time in a much deeper christological understanding." (Pg. 125)

He concludes, "The fact that, thirty or forty years after his death, church tradition identified him with the son of Zebedee and two hundred years later gave him the unique honorific title 'ho theologos,' was a recognition of his unique theological achievement. Behind that his individual personality retreated to such a degree that down to the present day research has almost completely lost sight of it. But with the unique theological individuality of his work we should try to rediscover at least the shadow of this great teacher to whom the church owes a good part of its foundation." (Pg. 134-135)

This creative and thought-provoking book will be of great interest to anyone studying the Fourth Gospel, or other Johannine writings.

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

A Treasure

By Ladd Gene Bjorneby

A book read by too few, this solid work is amazing. I bought it to replace a copy I had loaned out and that disappeared; I wouldn't be without it.

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