



Truth on Trial: The Lawsuit Motif in the Fourth Gospel

Andrew Lincoln

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Religious truth has always been in dispute, but there are certain times and places in which the debate has been more intense. One such period was the first century C.E., when the rapid spread of Christianity with its claims about Jesus produced considerable ferment. The Gospel of John, written late in that century, presents that dispute with greater clarity than any other document of the time. John presents a Jesus who claims not only to tell the truth but also to be the truth. And yet, as the Roman magistrate asks Jesus in John's gospel, what is truth?

Two millennia later in the Western world, pluralism and postmodernism radically challenge traditional notions of truth. Is there any truth beyond the formal logic of merely analytical propositions? And if there is, do humans have any way of knowing it? Many who have a postmodern perspective deny that either rationality or imagination can give us access to the truth. Instead they adopt a thoroughgoing incredulity toward metanarratives. Truth is again on trial.

In *Truth on Trial: The Lawsuit Motif in John's Gospel*, Andrew T. Lincoln links reflection on contemporary issues with careful study of the Fourth Gospel. Exegetical chapters discern the shape of John's narrative and the function of the lawsuit motif within it, describe antecedent uses of the motif in Jewish Scripture, and set John's use of the motif in theological, historical, and social perspective. Closing chapters on contemporary application explore the pervasive power of the trial metaphor in Western literature in relation to recent hermeneutical thought. Over against modern and post modern views, Lincoln argues that Christians can simultaneously exercise critical judgment and accept John's testimony that Christ is the truth.

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