Lewis offers a commentary expounding the final form of the text to help preachers connect with John’s story of Jesus for discipleship and witness ‘for the sake of the world God loves’ (p. xiii). Her introduction argues that the long-held designation of John as a ‘spiritual’ gospel is unhelpful, especially in preaching. For her, the incarnation and the humanity of Jesus are fundamental to understanding the gospel. She identifies eight theological themes that are introduced in the Prologue and ‘revisited and unpacked throughout the course of the narrative’ (p. 9). She thus devotes a whole chapter to an exposition of the Prologue before addressing the rest of the gospel. Her approach is to offer an informed theological exposition of the text without detailed engagement with scholarly debate. She seeks to make connections with the Revised Common Lectionary to enable preachers to engage with the text as read in many churches. She argues for the ‘orality’ of the gospel, the need to read significant sections aloud and for preachers constantly to make connections to the whole gospel narrative.

If you want to weigh up different scholarly interpretations of every verse, this commentary is not for you. However, if you are looking for a commentary that offers a thought-provoking exposition of John’s gospel with a view to issues the text raises for discipleship, this is an excellent commentary. You are bound not to agree with everything Lewis says, but that is her strength; she engages you in John’s narrative of the incarnate Word of God.

John
Karoline M. Lewis
FBPC; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014, 978-0-8006-9924-6, $22.00, xviii + 263 pb

Thompson’s short introduction targets not the complex scholarly discussion of John, but indispensable introductory matters and the characteristics of John’s particular witness to Jesus over against the Synoptics. The commentary proper—incorporating Thompson’s own translation from the Greek—covers John in six sections: 1.1-18 (introduction), 1.19-4.54 (‘witnesses to Jesus’), 5.1-12.50 (‘the life-giving Son of God’), 13.1-17.26 (Jesus and his disciples), 18.1-19.42 (arrest, trial, crucifixion of Jesus) and 20.1-21.25 (resurrection of Jesus). It is punctuated by nine pithy excurses dealing with important Johannine topics: word and wisdom, Son of God/Son/Son of Man, signs, life/eternal life, ‘I am’ sayings, 7.53–8.11, ‘the Jews’, faith and discipleship vocabulary, and the Holy Spirit. A scripture and other ancient sources index and an integrated subject/author index complete the commentary.

Thompson’s work accesses the Fathers (Augustine, Cyril, Ephrem and Origen) alongside modern commentators in English or German and features in-depth interaction with a broad selection of recent monographs and articles. Her aim, throughout, is to offer an interpretation of John: manifestly, it is born of sustained engagement with the text. Thompson’s concise introduction alerts readers to expect a focus on ‘the narrative and… broad cultural milieu out of which [John] arose’ (p. 22): in short, Jesus narratively and historically presented. Thompson’s editor has allowed her voice to speak: thus on the vexed question of the relation of Jn 20 and Jn 21, for example, she argues how for readers the latter successfully complements the former’s confirmation that Jesus is alive, by addressing ‘the long haul of discipleship and witness’ (p. 434).

John, his Gospel, and Jesus: In Pursuit of the Johannine Voice
Stanley E. Porter
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015, 978-0-8028-7170-1, $30.00, xii + 297 pb

Stanley Porter here offers nine essays on John’s gospel and Jesus, complemented by introduction, conclusion, bibliography and indexes. Only two essays, now revised, have been previously published. With characteristic thoroughness, Porter tackles a wide range of topics, including John’s sources, his audience, the Prologue, the ‘I am’ sayings, ‘the Jews’, John’s concept of ‘truth’, the Passover theme, and the gospel’s ending. In all this Porter is seeking the voice of Jesus, whose name appears in every chapter heading.

Porter defends an early dating for 95 and argues for the dependence of P.Egerton 2 on John. He convincingly maintains that the gospel was designed for a wide audience.