

## Preface to the Second Edition

In 2009, I wrote an article and a book on Johannine characters with the aim of reversing the consensus view that Johannine characters are types, have little complexity, and show little or no development.<sup>1</sup> The twofold work received considerable attention in the academy, and I have since contributed other essays on the subject.<sup>2</sup> More recently, Fortress Press agreed to publish a follow-up to my twofold work. The various reviews of my 2009 work have led me to sharpen, develop, and broaden my earlier theory of character, from an article on Johannine characters to a monograph on character in New Testament narratives: Cornelis Bennema, *A Theory of Character in New Testament Narrative* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014). That monograph provides the theoretical foundation for my understanding of character in John's Gospel and is essentially a companion to this second edition of my book on Johannine characters. The present book contains four major revisions. (1) I have added a chapter on Jesus, the protagonist in the Johannine narrative, with whom the other characters interact.<sup>3</sup> (2) I have indicated the

1. Bennema, "Theory of Character," 375–421; Bennema, *Encountering Jesus*.

2. See the following articles by Bennema: "Comprehensive Approach, 36–58; "Character of Pilate," 240–53; "Johannine Crowd," 347–55; "Judas the Betrayer," 360–72; "Chief Priests," 383–87; "Virtue Ethics," 167–81; "Figureanalyse"; "Gentile Characters."

3. In response to Rafael Rodríguez, Review of Bennema, *Encountering Jesus*, 270–72.

role of each character in the Johannine plot.<sup>4</sup> (3) I have adapted the table of character descriptors to correspond more closely with the *topoi* (“topics”) found in ancient Greco-Roman rhetorical handbooks and *progymnasmata*.<sup>5</sup> (4) I have sought to include the most significant contributions on the topic since 2007, which was essentially the *terminus ad quem* of the first edition.

The starting point for this book is the idea that John’s strategy for achieving the purpose of his Gospel—to evoke and strengthen belief in Jesus (20:30–31)—is to put various characters on the stage who interact with Jesus. John wants his readers to evaluate the characters’ responses to Jesus, join his point of view, and make an adequate belief–response themselves. If we were to stop there, all characters would be reduced to their responses and hence to types (as most scholars indeed conclude). My argument is that most Johannine characters are more complex and “round” than previously believed. Besides, the Johannine characters have a paradigmatic function but not in a reductionist, “typical” sense. It is the complete character—traits, development, and response—that is representative across cultures and time. This book, therefore, analyzes and classifies both the characters and their responses to Jesus. I have two reading suggestions. In chapter 1, the reader who is not interested in a literature review could skip the section “Previous Studies on Johannine Character” and go directly to the section “The Gaps,” which sums up the lacunae in Johannine character studies. The reader may also read subsequent chapters selectively since each chapter is self-contained. I should mention that I use “short titles” in the footnotes throughout, but the bibliography will give the full information for each title.

4. In response to David Ball, Review of Bennema, *Encountering Jesus*, 70.

5. In response to Alicia Myers, *Characterizing Jesus*, 6–7 n. 20.

I thank Dr Neil Elliott and the team at Fortress Press for their help in producing this twofold project on the study of character. I also thank Paternoster/Authentic Media UK for allowing this second edition. I am grateful to my wife, Susan, for her kind and able editing—I have dedicated this book to her. I thank God for his inspiration, guidance, and sustaining grace. May this book please him and be of use for his work on earth.