

Institution: University of Gloucestershire
Unit of Assessment: UoA33 Theology and Religious Studies
Title of case study: New Testament Studies
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Lincoln's research treats historical, literary, theological and hermeneutical issues in New Testament studies. Aiming to be accessible in its presentation, it has an impact throughout the English-speaking world on leaders in churches, teachers and sixth formers in schools and a broad audience interested in the interpretation of the Bible. In particular, it has contributed to bridging the gap between academic biblical studies and popular understanding in the church and society, as readers turn to his work on New Testament texts and issues to find ways to integrate the challenges of critical reading with an appreciation of the contemporary significance of the Bible for theological thinking and the religious imagination.</p> <p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Lincoln was appointed as Professor here in 1999. Four main areas of his work since then have been selected as generating broader impact. The first is the Gospel of John, on which he has written a major monograph, <i>Truth on Trial</i> (research for which began elsewhere but the writing of which was completed in 2000 after his move to the University of Gloucestershire), a major commentary, <i>The Gospel according to St. John</i> (2005), and a number of journal articles and essays. These have established him as one of the foremost international scholars on the Gospel of John and on issues such as its distinctiveness in relation to the Synoptic Gospels, its historicity, its literary and thematic structure, its place in early Christianity and relation to Second Temple Judaism, its influential Christology, and its ongoing role in Jewish-Christian relationships and in shaping the Christian theological tradition.</p> <p>A second major area of research has been the birth of Jesus. Here Lincoln has written an essay on some of the critical and hermeneutical issues in relating the New Testament to contemporary understandings of conception and to the church's creeds (2007) and given papers that resulted in two detailed journal articles on the interpretation of Matthew's and Luke's annunciation accounts (2012; 2013). His work has involved investigation, among other matters, of the genre of birth narratives, the diversity of New Testament perspectives on the conception of Jesus, and ancient understandings of procreation. He has undertaken further research and given lectures on how and why the virginal conception tradition became the dominant one in the period up to Augustine, how it came under scrutiny from Schleiermacher onwards and what the implications of contemporary notions of biology are for scriptural interpretation and Christology. Lincoln's research, papers and public lectures in this area have now culminated in a comprehensive monograph <i>Born of a Virgin? Reconceiving Jesus in the Bible, Tradition and Theology</i> (2013) published in the UK and the USA.</p> <p>A third area is the study of the letter to the Colossians, one of the disputed later Pauline letters. Lincoln has explored questions about the letter's pseudonymity, its relation to the thought of the undisputed Paul, its cosmic Christology and the nature of the spiritual wisdom it advocates for its readers and produced a substantial commentary, "The Letter to the Colossians" (2000).</p> <p>Finally, a further piece of underpinning research should be mentioned. With an eye on present disputes in the Anglican Communion, the Church of England's Council for Christian Unity commissioned Lincoln to write a paper on the concept of <i>koinonia</i> or communion in Paul's letters. Among the results of this work were a critique of the way in which much ecumenical literature has appropriated the concept and a proposal for a more adequate way of appealing to and interpreting the New Testament material. This research was published as an article in the peer-reviewed journal <i>Ecclesiology</i> (2009).</p>

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3. References to the research

Truth on Trial: The Lawsuit Motif in the Fourth Gospel (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000).

"The Letter to the Colossians" in ed. L. E. Keck, *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. XI (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 551-669.

The Gospel according to St. John (Black's New Testament Commentaries; London: Continuum, 2005). [Responses to and discussions of this commentary constituted the bulk of one issue of the *Journal for the Study of the New Testament- JSNT* 29.3 (2007)]

"Born of a Virgin: Creedal Affirmation and Critical Reading," in eds. A. **Lincoln** and A. Paddison, *Christology and Scripture: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (London: T. & T. Clark International, 2007) 84-103.

"Communion: Some Pauline Foundations" *Ecclesiology* 5 (2009) 135-60.

"Contested paternity and contested readings: Jesus' conception in Matthew 1.18-25" *JSNT* 34 (2012) 211 - 231.

"Luke and Jesus' Conception: A Case of Double Paternity?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132 (2013) 639-58.

4. Details of the impact

Indicators of the impact and benefit of **Lincoln's** research in these areas include invitations to lecture to those training for church ministry, clergy, teachers and members of the general public, recommendations to such groups by writers in journals and blogs about the outstanding value of his work for responsible preaching and teaching and a significant number of unsolicited emails from those who have employed his work in preaching or appreciated its enhancement of their understanding. Links to aspects of it also regularly feature on *the text this week*, a lectionary and Scripture study resource, one of the most influential Christian websites in the USA, generating two million hits a month mainly from ministers and educators.

The *Truth on Trial* monograph generated email correspondence from seminary students in the USA for whom it had been assigned as a set text, enthusiastic recommendations on internet sites, and quotations being reproduced in lectionary studies for preachers. It led to the invitation to give the only New Testament paper at a February, 2012 conference on the Divine Courtroom in Comparative Perspective at the Centre for Jewish Law and Contemporary Civilization, Yeshiva University, New York, where the sessions were open to rabbis, students and members of the public. The commentary on John's Gospel has been made available electronically for a wide international audience through Logos Bible Software and is consistently listed in the top five commentaries. In a recent article *The Expository Times*, a journal designed to keep clergy and laity abreast of developments in theology and ministry, states, "**Lincoln's** commentary ... is up-to-date, elegantly written and at times inspiring. It must be regarded as one of the best single volume commentaries in English currently available." Research on John resulted in a variety of invitations to address audiences beyond academia. These include a week of lectures at the Vacation Term for Biblical Study - a course for RE teachers, clergy, lay readers and interested members of the general public - at St. Anne's College, Oxford (July 2008); four addresses on "Life and Death in the Gospel of John" to the West of England Ministerial Training Course's residential Holy Week at Trinity College, Bristol (April 2009); 3 lectures and 2 workshops for German Baptist leaders in Hannover (October 2009); the annual lecture to churches in the diocese of Winchester in its "Unlocking the Bible" series (November 2009), attended also by tutors and students from the Southern Theological Educational and Training Scheme, where the commentary was being used as a set text. It was also a set text at Oak Hill Theological College, where **Lincoln** gave four lectures on John (April 2009; November 2010). Essays arising from the research, presented at conferences and subsequently published in conference proceedings volumes, have been singled

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out by reviewers as of outstanding value for pastors and teachers. His videos on John for A-Level students have also been noted and recommended by bloggers on biblical studies.

Lincoln's commentary on Colossians is regularly listed as among the best available and frequently recommended for its usefulness for teaching and preaching; pastors have sent emails expressing appreciation for its help; and extensive quotations from it have been used, for example, as the basis for Bible study materials in Lutheran dioceses in the USA and in sermons for Earth Sunday, 2009. It led to **Lincoln** writing the material on Colossians for the Bible Reading Fellowship's *Guidelines* series, which has a distribution of 10,000.

The gap between the academy and popular understanding of the Bible in both church and society is particularly evident in the treatment of the stories of Jesus' birth at Christmas. **Lincoln** proposes ways of being critically honest about the nature of the texts while negotiating creedal statements on the birth of Jesus in a contemporary context. Various parts of the research were presented, for example, to an audience of students, faculty, clergy and members of the public in the Ethel M. Wood annual lecture on the English Bible at King's College, London (March, 2009) and to the general audience of the Vacation Term for Biblical Studies in Oxford in five lectures (August, 2011). One of the clergy present for the Oxford course later sent a copy of the sermon he had preached on the Sunday before Christmas, incorporating insights from the lectures. **Lincoln's** recent JBL article on Luke has led to his being commissioned to write a more popular article in this area for the *Biblical Archaeological Review*, a magazine with a worldwide subscription for a broad general audience eager to understand the world of the Bible better. His very recent book on the overall topic of the virgin birth has already attracted enthusiastic attention from bloggers and others both before and after its publication.

The implications of **Lincoln's** research on the concept of *koinonia* in Paul's Letters were presented as a keynote address to the Porvoo Conference (a consultation between the Church of England and the state churches of Northern Europe) on Ethics and Communion (January, 2008). This contribution received a favourable mention in a more popular article in the *Church Times*, because of its relevance to present problems within the Anglican Communion, and led to participation in the Church of England's further consultation with the German State Lutheran Church under the Meissen Agreement in Düsseldorf (November, 2008) on the topic of "The Authority and Uses of the Bible in the Life of the Churches."

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. For commentary and research on John:

F. J. Moloney "Recent Johannine Studies: Part One: Commentaries," *ExpTim* 123 (2012) 313-22

<http://www.logos.com/product/4371/blacks-new-testament-commentary#002>

<http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/16086615>

http://www.amazon.com/Gospel-According-John-Testament-Commentaries/dp/0826471390/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1339849584&sr=1-2&keywords=Lincoln%2C+Gospel+according+to+St.+John

Reviews in *Currents in Theology and Mission* 36.4 (2009) illustrates the statement about the impact of the essays on John. Of the book *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology* the reviewer says, ". . . several essays deserve special attention for their depth and practicality. 'The Lazarus Story: A Literary Perspective' by Andrew Lincoln demonstrates the centrality of the raising of Lazarus in John's Gospel. Readers get a feel for the entire Gospel in his astute literary analysis. No better summary of the Gospel is found than in this chapter... Pastors will read with much profit."

2. For *Truth on Trial*: Readers' reviews at

<http://www.amazon.com/Truth-Trial-Lawsuit-Fourth-Gospel/dp/1565632826>

www.reformedreader.wordpress.com/2008/09/09/andrew-lincoln-on-the-jews-pilate-and-jesus-trial/

www.anglicantas.org.au/index.php?item=file&target=lec_study_270512

3. Videos for schools - <http://philosvids.wordpress.com/category/john/> and <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/bibleandculture/2012/11/14/andrew-lincoln-on-the-spiritual-gospel-johns>

4. For commentary on Colossians:

Dr. Nijay Gupta, Northeastern Seminary of Roberts Western College -

<http://nijaygupta.wordpress.com/2012/01/08/on-colossians-why-another-commentary/>

<http://www.vasynod.org/files/.../Colossians/2-7-06%202-20-23.doc>

<http://www.heartofeugene.org/Sermons/2009/ChristInCreation.htm>

5. Advance expectations of impact for book on birth of Jesus:

Robert Morgan, Linacre College, Oxford – *“Lincoln’s masterly literary and historical analyses of the traditions relating to Jesus’ birth in the New Testament and beyond offer theological and hermeneutical reflection at its best, and a model for maintaining a responsible conversation between opposing views. On a subject where some think there is little more to say, this book provides a theological education in miniature.”*

Helen Bond, University of Edinburgh – *“With an engaging blend of sensitivity and erudition, Lincoln charts the rise to dominance of the ‘virgin birth’ - despite other New Testament accounts of Jesus’ origins - and shows how recent biblical scholarship, biology and worldviews demand a reappraisal of the tradition for the modern Church. This masterly study will provide essential reading for confessing Christians who struggle with accepting the historicity of the virginal conception. I cannot recommend it highly enough.”*

<http://newtestamentperspectives.blogspot.co.uk/2013/06/andrew-lincolns-latest-born-of-virgin.html>

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/exploringourmatrix/2013/07/christianity-in-a-nutshell.html>

“... a wonderful forthcoming book by Andrew Lincoln that deals spectacularly well with this topic: *Born of a Virgin? Reconceiving Jesus in the Bible, Tradition, and Theology*. I expect it to be for our generation what Raymond Brown’s *The Birth of the Messiah* was for the previous one.”

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/exploringourmatrix/2013/09/andrew-lincoln-born-of-a-virgin.html> indicates why this is a timely issue for Christians today, citing an extended passage from the book.

<http://blog.christilling.de/2013/10/andrew-lincolns-born-of-virgin.html>