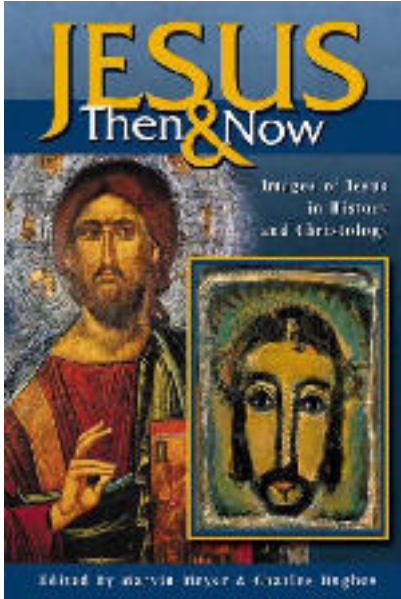


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Meyer, Marvin, and Charles Hughes, eds.

Jesus Then and Now: Images of Jesus in History and Christology

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Jan van der Watt
University of Pretoria
Pretoria, South Africa 0081

Jesus Then and Now: Images of Jesus in History and Christology is a collection of articles dealing with different issues related to Jesus. Articles by internationally known Jesus-scholars such as Brown, Funk, Crossan, Wright, Hick, and Robinson are combined with articles by lesser-known scholars. This results in an interesting diversity. The book comes as a result of an international conference and several other presentations held at Chapman University in 1999. The articles have been reworked, and some additional ones were included.

The articles are divided into three sections: “Images of Jesus in History”; “Images of Jesus in Christology”; and “Images of Jesus in Judaism, Islam, and the Future.” The first section on images of Jesus in history begins with an article by James Robinson on “The Image of Jesus in Q.” Colin Brown focuses on “The Jesus of Mark’s Gospel,” while N. T. Wright gives his views on “Jesus and the Resurrection.” Marvin Meyer makes the strange combination “Albert Schweitzer and the Image of Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas.” Dominic Crossan treats a topic that is central to his thought, namely, “Eschatology, Apocalypticism, and the Historical Jesus.” J. Reed focuses on often-neglected material in his article, “Galilean Archaeology and the Historical Jesus.” Robert Funk gives a good overview of the Jesus Seminar in his article “The Jesus Seminar and the Quest.”

Part 2 concentrates on Jesus in Christology and is introduced by an article on “Literal and Metaphorical Christologies” by John Hick. “Pluralism, Inclusivism, and Christology” by Charles Hughes is followed by “Evidence for the Incarnation” by Richard Swinburne. Karen Torjesen looks into the issue of “Wisdom, Christology, and Women Prophets.” Ronald Farmer deals with “Jesus in Process Christology” and Carter Heyward with “Subverting Authoritarian Relation: Jesus’ Power and Ours.” A specifically Catholic perspective comes from Didier Pollefeyt with his article entitled “Christology after Auschwitz: A Catholic Perspective.”

Part 3 consists of three articles: “Jesus and Islam” by F. Peters; “Jewish Perspectives on Jesus” by David Sperling; and Lloyd Gering’s “The Global Future and Jesus.”

Part 1 on the images of Jesus in history makes for good reading. With Robinson and Crossan, on the one hand, and Brown and Wright, on the other, a broad spectrum of opinions is covered. Wright’s article stands out. He develops his argument in three stages. He discusses Christianity as kingdom-of-God movement, a messianic movement, and a resurrection movement. He develops his arguments against the background of Jewish positions. In the case of the kingdom-of-God movement he shows that the Christians had Jewish expectations and that they linked the resurrection of Jesus to the dawning of the new age and the presence of the kingdom. In spite of Jesus’ crucifixion, the Christians maintained that Jesus is the Messiah. The resurrection was so remarkable that it reversed all the normal reactions to Jesus’ crucifixion. As resurrection movement, they maintained that the new age had dawned. What is appealing in Wright’s argument is that he develops scenarios of possibilities in the light of sociocultural realities of the Jewish world in which Jesus lived. He argues for the plausibility of the resurrection against this background.

Crossan enters a discussion with Allison about the apocalyptic historical Jesus. He follows an interesting *modus operandi*. He departs from the position of Allison and then tries to show where the weak points in the argument are. He also treats an interesting question, namely, If Jesus’ announcement of apocalyptic consummation was wrong, why did Christianity grow stronger and stronger? He also describes the type of apocalyptic Jesus he is prepared to talk about and points out that it comes very close to what he calls “ethical eschatology.” Crossan does not want to accept the argument of Wright, which proposes that the resurrection was enough to explain the radical events related to the historical Jesus and early Christian movement.

Brown focuses on the image of Jesus in Mark. Mark has shaped the life of Jesus in the form of a tragic-epic narrative. He answers affirmatively to the question whether we encounter the Jesus of history through this picture of Jesus. Robinson focuses on the image of Jesus in Q, noting that it was a radical Jesus who required one to lose one’s life and to take up one’s cross. No wonder the movement died out. The remnant merged with

the Gentile Christian church under the leadership of “Matthew.” These two articles follow different approaches and show different sides of early Christian thinking about Jesus.

The article by Reed on the use of archaeology is also worth reading. It tries to show how the archaeological material can help us to understand the social and cultural situation in which Jesus acted. He tries to move away from a form of archaeology that tries only to prove the Gospels right. Another usable article is that of Funk, for the simple reason that it provides a good summary of the origin and modus operandi of the Jesus Seminar. It demythologizes the seminar and places it in proper perspective.

In part 2, the articles of Hick and Hughes may be read together. Hick defends his view that a Christology based on the metaphorical character of the concept of divine incarnation is logically viable. He maintains that the fully God, fully man mystery is a human philosophical construction and not divine revelation. A metaphorical understanding of divine incarnations should therefore be preferred.

Hughes argues for inclusivism, against the pluralistic view of Hick. He shows that inclusivism provides a “simpler and more adequate explanation of the data than does Hick’s pluralism” (155). He explains what is meant by both pluralism and inclusivism. He relies heavily on the work of the Holy Spirit, both inside and outside the church, for his inclusivistic argument. The Spirit becomes the key to understanding how salvation may also reach people apart from the Christian movement. Through the Spirit, the God of love meets people in their respective situations.

The article by Swinburne also contains interesting insights. He illustrates the importance of background evidence independently from detailed historical evidence. He also discusses the kind of historical evidence needed. He discusses the evidence he regards necessary and then uses Bayes’s Theorem to calculate the probability that Jesus was God incarnate. He finds that the probability is more than 50 percent.

Part 3 presents Jewish as well as Islamic perspectives on Jesus. Both articles are interesting, especially the one on the Islamic image of Jesus. The inclusion of these articles in this volume is welcome. It broadens the discussion and perspectives on Jesus in a way that is usually not found in publications about Jesus.

This volume is worth reading. The articles are generally of high standard and present the reader with a wide variety of opinions and points of view on Jesus. Every reviewer will inevitably agree with some and disagree with other opinions, depending on one’s own point of view. To try to criticize some and praise other opinions would be inappropriate for any review on a publication of this nature. By including such diverse, contrasting, and opposing articles, this publication is self-critical. The publication wants to present the

reader with different approaches and perspectives, and this is exactly its strongest point. The reader is exposed to a diversity of methods, opinions, ways of dealing with different theological and historical issues, and the like in relation to the Jesus of history. I can recommend this volume to pastors and students alike who want a reliable overview of some of the most important opposing positions taken in Jesus research.