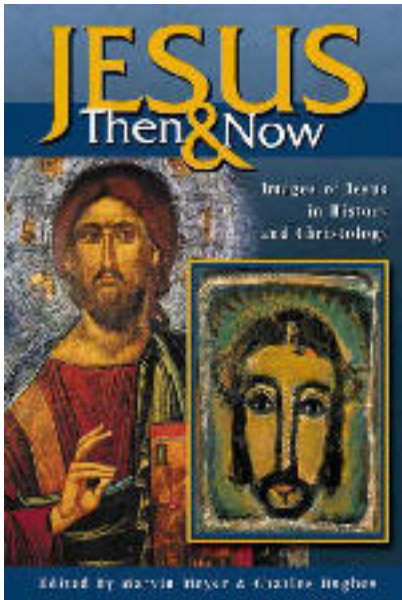


RBL 08/2005



Meyer, Marvin, and Charles Hughes, eds.

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

Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2001. Pp. viii + 294. Paper. \$35.00. ISBN 1563383446.

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Meyer and Hughes have edited a highly useful, if not unified, set of essays in this single volume. Most of the papers are derived from an international conference, “Images of Jesus,” and other presentations at Chapman University in 1999. These essays were revised for publication in the present volume, and other invited essays were added to round out the study. The editors’ purpose was to “present a wide variety of scholarly interpretations of the historical Jesus and Christ in christological formulations” (1). Most of the essays study Jesus in either history or theology, while three essays are on Jesus in Judaism, Islam, and in relation to the future. The diverse specializations of the authors in addition to their variant perspectives means that there is much disagreement among the authors, even though they are not debating alternative sides of a given proposition (with one or two exceptions). The authors include Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, feminist, and other perspectives, which ensures there will be no unanimity in this collection. This is to be expected when the authors range in viewpoint from N. T. Wright to John Dominic Crossan and when biblical scholars are mixed in the discussion with philosophers and theologians.

Part 1, “Images of Jesus in History,” begins with a survey by James M. Robinson on the present state of Q in scholarly studies. He concludes that the image of Jesus is one of radical demands, such as taking up one’s cross, and this was preserved and passed on

primarily in Matthew's Gospel. Colin Brown's study of Jesus in Mark places the life of Jesus in a tragic-epic narrative framework, which he contends has major implications on the Jesus of history question. N. T. Wright interacts with recent works on the resurrection of Jesus that have appeared after his own volume. He concludes "that the only explanation that will fit all the evidence available is that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed bodily raised from the dead on Easter morning" (69). One of the editors, Marvin Meyer, writes on Jesus in the *Gospel of Thomas*, where the focus is, of course, on sayings much like Q and their possible significance for the Jesus of history. John Dominic Crossan's essay attempts clarification of the apocalyptic in Jesus by interacting with two works, written almost a century apart, namely, Schweitzer's *Quest* and Dale C. Allison's *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet*. Jonathan Reed explores archeological evidence in Galilee from the first century and its implications for the historical Jesus. This is a source of potential information in understanding the historical Jesus that is little used. Finally, to complete the historical section, Robert Funk summarizes the work and conclusions of the Jesus Seminar as Christianity enters the third millennium.

Part 2, "Images of Jesus in Christology," also has seven essays. John Hick argues for the superiority of metaphorical understandings of the doctrine of incarnation over traditional literal understandings. Charles T. Hughes, the other editor of the volume, contends for the superiority of Christian inclusivism, with a traditional Christology, over Hick's religious pluralism. Philosopher Richard Swinburne uses Bayesian probability calculus to contend for the incarnation of Jesus Christ. To this reviewer, many assumptions were offered on the kind of historical evidence needed to make his case, but little justification was given for their validity. The limitations of a diverse set of essays becomes obvious at this point as two sides of the coin are presented with the essays by Hick and Swinburne, but only one is found in Hughes's study. Karen Torjesen analyzes wisdom Christology and its importance for women prophets in the early church. The historical consequences for women in the demise of wisdom Christology and implications for contemporary feminists are noted. Potential contributions of process theology for the study of Jesus are the subject of Ronald L. Farmer's essay. Carter Heyward's essay is adapted from her book, *Saving Jesus from Those Who Are Right*, and it is an unusual mixture of theology, meditation, and spiritual ramblings that seemed out of place alongside the other papers. Her focus is on bringing unjust power relationships more into line with love. The last essay in the theological section is Didier Pollefeyt's thoughts on Christology after Auschwitz. How can and should Christ be presented to the Jews in light of the Holocaust, and what are the implications for interfaith dialogue? I found this essay to be the most thought provoking in the whole volume.

The final section contains three essays. S. David Sperling briefly examines Jewish perspectives on Jesus in the Talmud and later Jewish tradition. He concludes that when

polemic is understood within the historical circumstances, which partially gave rise to it, the result can be understanding and better relations between Jews and Christians. F. E. Peters does a similar survey on the place of Jesus within Islam and the Qur'an. In answer to the question of Muhammad's source for his knowledge of Jesus, Peters suggests the Syrian Eastern monks. The final essay, by Lloyd Geering, contends that we have entered the third phase of human history, namely, global culture. He considers the place of Jesus in our thinking in this new era of history.

The chief problem with this collection of papers is the lack of a common thread to tie them together. On the other hand, their diversity means that there should be something to appeal to almost anyone from a wide variety of readers. Finding that appealing something is aided by an excellent index to the volume. The papers in this volume tend to be too brief to do more than raise a few possibilities and give some evidence to be considered. However, significant documentation is provided by most of the authors, which means these essays can be a useful springboard to further study by students and scholars alike. Personally I found the historical and concluding miscellaneous essays to be more helpful than the theological ones. There was very little biblical Christology in the theological section, a little more of which would have been a welcome transition from the historical essays. Many top scholars were included in this volume, and some of the papers are a condensed version of extensive work already published.