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Burridge, Richard A., and Graham Gould

Jesus Now and Then

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This book is based on nine lectures presented by Richard Burridge and Graham Gould at Kings College London. The book, like the lectureship, is designed as an introduction to Jesus for nonspecialists, specifically, the way in which Jesus effects people *now* but also back *then* in the first century (xi). The New Testament section is indebted to Burridge, while the theological section is the work of Gould.

Chapter 1 examines the person of Jesus at the start of the third millennium and Christian interpretations of Jesus. The occasion of the millennium and recent films about Jesus provide the starting point for the question of what Christians believe about Jesus. What follows is an overview of christological debates in the early and modern church. The traditional Christian view of Jesus as “divine and human” (6) is stated briefly and is followed with the history behind the doctrine. The tone is somewhat apologetic: the resurrection could not generate belief in Jesus’ divine status (7); divine-man myths were not generally applied to historical figures (8); there were pressures independent of Greco-Roman influence for Christians to worship Jesus (9); incarnational Christology was not imported from Greek philosophy (11); the philosophical approach to Christology was necessary for Christians in the second to fifth centuries to articulate their faith in Jesus as human and divine (11); and the Council of Nicea did not have the purpose of propagating the doctrine of the Trinity as something new but to clarify the doctrine in view of the

Arian heresy (12). This is not to deny that the points are valid, but it does transform the role of the chapter from “introduction” to “apology” at certain points. The rest of the chapter browses over the reinterpretation of Jesus in modern thought, including the Quest for the Historical Jesus, popular works about Jesus, post-Enlightenment rejections of Trinitarian theism, and the radical Christology of John Robinson.

Chapter 2 includes a brief introduction to the various quests for the historical Jesus, Gospel criticism, a survey of sources, and a scant outline of Jesus’ public career. In discussing various approaches to Jesus research, Burrige declares that the Jesus Seminar “has produced a Jesus who is not Jewish in his teaching, but more like a Greek wisdom teacher or philosopher, and he’s against sexism, imperialism and all the oppressiveness of the Roman empire. In other words, he’s a Californian” (32). Burrige uses the standard survey in explaining the Quest for the Historical Jesus (e.g., First Quest, Second/New Quest, and Third Quest), yet in light of criticisms of this approach by Stanley E. Porter (*The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research* [JSNTSup 191; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000], 28–59) and Dale C. Allison (“The Contemporary Quest for the Historical Jesus,” *IBS* 18 [1996]: 174–93), such a classification is overly simplistic and potentially misleading.

The third chapter surveys Jesus in the Gospels. Burrige, based on his earlier work, suggests that the Gospels are a form of biography analogous in genre to the Lives of the ancient world. This is followed by an overview of the portrait of Jesus in each of the four Gospels.

Jesus and Paul are examined in chapter 4. Wisdom Christology, the significance of attributing the title “Lord” to Jesus, and early creedal fragments are all discussed. The brief sections on Paul’s life and theology should probably have been placed at the beginning of the chapter, since they provide the context for analysis of Paul’s Christology. It also seems out of place to delay discussion of whether Paul thought of Jesus as God until chapter 5, since it would fit nicely here. Additionally, a more rigorous discussion of what is meant by “monotheism” would have been helpful. Nevertheless, Burrige aptly summarizes the center of Paul’s belief and experience of Jesus: “Jesus is the means by which all the hopes and anticipations of the Jewish people about the age to come is now being made available through the death and resurrection of Christ” (85).

New Testament views of Jesus are summarized in the fifth chapter. Burrige touches upon Paul’s view of Jesus as somehow divine, Jesus’ self-understanding, the Christology of the Pastoral Epistles, the Catholic Epistles, and Revelation. In the closing paragraphs to the New Testament section, Burrige allows for a breadth of diversity in New Testament Christology but rejects any theory of evolution from Jewish rabbi to Gentile

God (a passing shot at Maurice Casey). BurrIDGE states: “The roots of the so-called ‘high’ Christology, seeing Jesus sharing the life of God, are there right at the earliest level within the first communities of Jewish believers, indeed perhaps even in Jesus’ own self-understanding. This is not something that gets imported half a century later from a Greek background. It is better, therefore, to talk about the development of Christology, or even of Christologies within the New Testament” (108).

The next section, by Gould, concerns responses to Jesus in early Christianity. Gould looks at the impact of Jesus’ teaching in the early church in chapter 6. Justin Martyr, Origen, and *2 Clement* are discussed as examples of Christian moral exhortation. Chapter 7 gives an overview of early Christian worship with particular attention to baptism and Eucharist. The doctrines of the incarnation and the Trinity are examined in chapter 8, with emphasis on the *logos* theology, the various councils, patristic theologians, the major creeds, and the “isms” that arose (e.g., Arianism, Apollinarianism, Nestorianism). The explanation of terms such as *homoousios* and *hypostasis* are clear and helpful for the uninitiated. Chapter 9 deals with modern understandings of Jesus, focusing on the effect of the Enlightenment and the advent of postmodernity on christological discussion. The lack of detailed interaction with modern theologians made it a fairly disappointing chapter.

BurrIDGE and Gould have produced a well-written and user-friendly introduction to the historical and theological questions surrounding Jesus. The box inserts throughout the book are helpful and explain technical terms such as eschatology, Gospel, Dead Sea Scrolls, and sacrament. The book could easily be subtitled “Jesus for Dummies.” The basic nature of the content means that the book is well suited for an introductory course to Christology for undergraduates. The book on the whole is a good synthesis of biblical scholarship, historical and contemporary theology, liturgy, and culture. My only qualm is that the book could do with a better recommended reading list that directs readers to more thorough treatments of Christology, early Christianity, and historical Jesus studies. I have in mind particularly works by James Dunn, Maurice Casey, Richard Bauckham, N. T. Wright, Larry Hurtado, Robin Lane Fox, and John Macquarrie.