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**Kloppenborg, John S., and John W. Marshall, eds.**

***Apocalypticism, Anti-Semitism and the Historical Jesus: Subtexts in Criticism***

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It has been clear since the work of Albert Schweitzer that ideological and/or theological subtexts, one way or another, play havoc with the historical enterprise of describing Jesus and the various cultural, religious, and other matrices against which he must be understood, and it has become a commonplace in this generation of historical Jesus research for scholars to accuse their opponents of being guided more by such subtexts than by the evidence. In this regard, the questions of Jesus' alleged apocalypticism and of his location in Second Temple Judaism are always in the foreground of the discussion. This collection of essays explores these two issues and the subtexts that make them crucial to biblical scholarship. The collection originated in a symposium of the same name held March 7, 2003, at Trinity College, University of Toronto, with funding provided by the Chancellor Jackman Program for the Arts at the University of Toronto.

The opening essay, by John S. Kloppenborg, is "As One Unknown, Without a Name? Co-opting the Apocalyptic Jesus" (1–23). Surveying scholarship on the question of the apocalypticism of Jesus since Albert Schweitzer, Kloppenborg asks not whether Jesus was an apocalypticist but why it matters one way or another to critical scholarship, especially given that advocates of a nonapocalyptic Jesus are sometimes accused of being led by theological or ideological bias. He finds that "significant conceptual work has been done by apocalyptic constructions of the historical Jesus," especially in providing the basis for claims about the uniqueness of Jesus or Christianity (21). The fact that both depictions of Jesus (apocalyptic and nonapocalyptic) have been theologically or ideologically useful does not mean they are historically unsound; that is an entirely different question.

In “The Cipher ‘Judaism’ in Contemporary Historical Jesus Scholarship” (24–54), William Arnal asks why, given that the ethnic and religious identity of Jesus as a Jew is not in dispute, polemic among scholars of the historical Jesus often rages around accusations that certain reconstructions result in “non-Jewish” depictions of Jesus. Like Kloppenborg, Arnal is also interested in the “work” that scholarly descriptions do; here the issue is how Jesus scholars describe Judaism. He finds that traditionalistic conceptions of Jesus’ Judaism are congenial to various ancillary (and mainly subtextual) goals: to reclaim Christianity from complicity in the Holocaust or to defend traditionalistic understandings of discrete religions (in particular Christianity) or to secure a place for specific cultural identity in the face of creeping globalization.

Paula Fredriksen examines a similar topic in “Compassion Is to Purity as Fish Is to Bicycle, and Other Reflections on Constructions of ‘Judaism’ in Current Work on the Historical Jesus” (55–67). Fredriksen begins with a brief survey of religion in antiquity under two headings: “in antiquity, gods ran in the blood”; “in antiquity, all monotheists were polytheists” (56). She next takes note of certain current “caricatures” of Judaism that not only fail to take the turn-of-the-era context into full consideration but also serve other, contemporary, goals of legitimation or authorization.

John W. Marshall contributes “Apocalypticism and Anti-Semitism: Inner-group Resources for Inter-group Conflicts” (68–82). This is a study of how later Christian texts—Marshall works with the *Epistle of Barnabas* and the *Testament of Levi*—deploy polemical strategies of earlier Jewish texts, strategies that originally were directed internally, in efforts to assert or inculcate the superiority of Christianity over Judaism. Marshall’s conclusions focus more on the challenges and dangers of fixing Jesus within Judaism, especially the dangers of promoting as central to Judaism elements that serve Christian apologetic aims (81–82).

In “The Earth Moved: Jesus, Sex, and Eschatology” (83–97), A.-J. Levine notes that there are important stakes in the discussion of Jesus’ sexual ethics: first, Jesus’ apocalypticism will necessarily impinge on his views about sex and gender roles; and second, recent work on Jesus’ views on these topics often turns on misperceptions of first-century Judaism, over against which Jesus is defined as uniquely compassionate or egalitarian (84–85). Levine makes a case, on the basis of teachings throughout the Jesus traditions on marriage, celibacy, divorce, family, and so forth, that such teachings are thoroughly consistent with an apocalyptic and Jewish Jesus (97).

Dale C. Allison Jr. surveys “the *theological* convictions that have encouraged or discouraged fondness for a fervently eschatological Jesus” in his essay “The Problem of Apocalyptic: From Polemic to Apologetics” (98–110). While an apocalyptic Jesus has

been espoused in order to disprove Christianity (99–100), apologetic, polemical, and theological ends may also be served by such a reconstruction of Jesus (100–104). On the other side, those uncomfortable with a Jesus mistaken about the timing of the end, or other “theologically uncongenial or embarrassing” ideas, have opposed apocalyptic reconstructions (104–6). Allison concludes with some caveats against assigning motivation to scholars at work in the field.

Finally, Robert J. Miller examines certain “Theological Stakes in the Apocalyptic Jesus Debate” (111–21). He argues that proponents of an apocalyptic Jesus are necessarily involved in a “theological salvage operation” that, for all they might find aspects of Jesus’ apocalypticism agreeable, must make certain aspects of his message (e.g., teachings on social deviance, the beatitudes) sensible in light of the unavoidable conclusion that he was wrong about the coming end (113–16). Miller also maintains that Jesus’ nonviolence and his use of parables are more consistent with a nonapocalyptic understanding.

Most of the papers show evidence of a vibrant interchange before and during the conference, and this interchange is further demonstrated in the concluding responses from Allison and Arnal (122–30). When the collection is considered as a whole, some contributions display a closer focus on methodological and ideological issues than others (Kloppenborg, Arnal, Allison), and some deal more closely with particular (ancient) textual expressions of the topics at hand (Marshall, Levine). An important feature of the book is that it features essays by scholars who, far from being outsiders in the debate, have their own publicly articulated perspectives on the central issues: Allison and Miller, for instance, are well-known proponents of opposing views on the question of Jesus’ apocalypticism. Because Miller’s paper focuses on the theological problems raised by an apocalyptic Jesus, it reads more like an argument against such a view than an examination of the subtexts in the critical discussion, though he states that is not his direct purpose (111). Allison’s contributions are particularly interesting because he examines the subtexts of others who take a position similar to his. He states that an apocalyptic Jesus is problematic for him on a variety of levels (107), by which (in the end) he implies something about his view of his historical work (122). Yet in the final analysis, Arnal is right, in his concluding remarks, that “what matters about discourse is how it is deployed and how it can be deployed within a larger cultural framework; not what individual quirks may have motivated it” (129–30). What this volume offers is insight, not into the motivations of individual scholars, but into the usefulness of (or the “work” that can be done by) arguments and conclusions in the current debate. Overall, the book marks an important step forward in the study of historical Jesus research, and one hopes it will contribute to greater precision, circumspection, and collegiality in the

field. At the very least it exposes what is at stake (at or just below the surface) in the often heated and rhetorically charged debates about Jesus' Judaism and apocalypticism.