

BOOK REVIEWS

Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus. Edited by Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter. 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2011, xxi + 3652 pp., \$1,329.00.

Tom Holmén is Adjunct Professor of New Testament Exegesis at Helsinki University and Åbo Akademi University. He previously edited *Jesus from Judaism to Christianity: Continuum Approaches to the Historical Jesus* (London: T&T Clark, 2007) and *Jesus in Continuum* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012) and is the author of several other studies on the life and teachings of the historical Jesus. Stanley E. Porter is Professor of New Testament, president, and dean at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario. He is the author and editor of over 65 volumes on a range of subjects within NT studies and related fields, including *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000; rev. ed.; London: T&T Clark, 2004). The editors' purpose in compiling these essays was to create a "summa historica" of Jesus studies through the "collaboration of a legio of the best minds from across many countries and cultures," especially given the abundance of Jesus studies today "that displays an almost overwhelming diversity of methods, approaches, hypotheses, assumptions, and results" (p. xv). The editors draw attention to the fact that historical Jesus studies have exploded, going off in many different directions with a variety of agendas. Nevertheless, they maintain, it is "vital to genuinely retain the concepts of historical Jesus and historical Jesus research around which the variegated conversation centers and revolves" (p. xvi). The *Handbook* (HSHJ) was designed as a "means of handling both the growing abundance and the increasing diversity of Jesus scholarship. . . . The HSHJ seeks to offer a convenient, even if still circuitous, route through the maze of current historical Jesus research, so that scholars and other interested parties can appreciate the broad and diverse spectrum of current opinion" (pp. xvi–xvii). The *Handbook* aims to be thorough and inclusive; is international in scope; and does not side with any particular ideology.

Volume 1, "How to Study the Historical Jesus" (pp. i–xxi, 1–851 [851pp.]), includes 27 essays. Part One: "Contemporary Methodological Approaches" (pp. 1–616) features 18 essays, and Part Two: "Various Aspects of Historical Jesus Methodology" (pp. 617–851) is made up of 9 additional essays. Volume 2, "The Study of Jesus" (pp. i–xxi, 852–1817 [965pp.]), consists of 30 essays, including 8 essays in Part One: "The Ongoing Quest for the Historical Jesus" (pp. 852–1102), and 11 essays each in Part Two: "Current Questions of Jesus Research" (pp. 1103–1438) and Part Three: "Persisting Issues Adjacent to the Jesus-Quest" (pp. 1439–1817). Volume 3: "The Historical Jesus" (pp. i–xxi, 1818–2909 [1091pp.]), contains 35 essays, of which 11 are in Part One: "Jesus Tradition in Individual Documents" (pp. 1819–2180), 13 in Part Two: "Fundamentally about Jesus" (pp. 2181–2571), and 11 in Part Three: "Jesus and the Legacy of Israel" (pp. 2573–2909). Volume 4,

“Individual Studies” (pp. i–xxi, 2910–3468; indices 3469–3652 [742pp.]), finally, includes 19 essays. This is followed by an Index of Ancient Sources (pp. 3469–3604) and an Index of Modern Authors (pp. 3605–52). The total number of essays is 111. The introduction says there are “approximately one-hundred contributors” (p. xviii; I counted 88, including Holmén and Porter) from “around twenty different countries” (p. xviii). There is no comprehensive list of contributors, countries of origin, and current positions. Nevertheless, it is obvious by reading the essays that the editors have achieved the diversity they were seeking, with an array of both conservative and progressive scholars, and many in between. On the part of the editors, Stanley Porter contributed four essays, and Tom Holmén three. Apart from the editors, the most prolific author in the set is Colin Brown, who also contributed three essays. A handful of authors wrote two essays, including James Charlesworth and James Robinson. A select list of other noted contributors includes Dale Allison, Peter Balla, Michael Bird, Darrell Bock, Samuel Byrskog, Bruce Chilton, John J. Collins, John Dominic Crossan, James Dunn, Craig Evans, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Richard T. France, Joel Green, Donald Hagner, Harold Hoehner, Richard Horsley, David Instone-Brewer, Luke Timothy Johnson, Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, Bruce Malina, Scot McKnight, John P. Meier, Teresa Okure, Grant Osborne, Rainer Riesner, D. Moody Smith, Gerd Theissen, Marianne Meye Thompson, and David Wenham. The collection would have been improved further with contributions from other major figures in the field. For example, there is no contribution by N. T. Wright. Other omissions include Burton Mack, Robert Funk, and Marcus Borg, as well as Ben Witherington, Géza Vermes, and Peter Stuhlmacher, amongst others. Nevertheless, the volumes represent an impressive array of scholarly works, both in terms of depth and breadth.

Volume 1, “How to Study the Historical Jesus,” aims to offer “easier access than before to the range of methods currently at play in historical Jesus studies” (p. xix). Authors range from those with liberal/progressive ideologies such as John Dominic Crossan and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza to those with more conservative, evangelical postures such as Grant Osborne and Rainer Riesner. The volume also includes the major scholars one would expect to hear from on this topic, such as James Charlesworth and James Dunn. Yet while there is certainly diversity among the methodologies, there is no attempt by the editors (no doubt in an effort to remain “neutral” toward the ideologies expressed) to categorize or trace the various methodologies. The contributors are merely organized in alphabetical order with no editorial bridge or categorization. Progressive or conservative, critical or constructive, the essays are mixed together with no overarching framework, mirroring the “explosion” of Jesus studies itself (cf. p. xvi). Perhaps it would have been helpful to provide some kind of roadmap to follow, such as, for example, a progression from authors who still use traditional methods—e.g. Charlesworth (pp. 91ff.), who defends the standard criteria for determining authenticity—to those who now challenge these criteria (e.g. Allison [pp. 3ff]). Bringing some type of organizational structure to the collection would have been more in keeping with the editors’ assertion that “the future of historical Jesus study rests with the community of scholars being able to harness ... chaotic

creativity to its service, and to create order out of a morass of growing detail” (p. xvi). As it stands, however, the essays continually oscillate between non-traditional and traditional or somewhere in between. By comparison, the essays in Part Two of Volume 1 appear more controlled by the editors, judging by the parallelism of most of the titles, the fact that the authors are not arranged in strict alphabetical order, and the presence of a very appropriate concluding essay for the entire volume, exploring the “burden of proof.” Similarly, the editors may have chosen to begin Volume 1 with John P. Meier’s excellent essay “Basic Methodology” (pp. 291ff). Besides serving as a natural starting point for the rest of the essays, Meier’s presentation of a philosophy of historical study and his summary of the relevant data would sufficiently acclimatize uninitiated readers to Jesus studies from the start. Instead, Meier is buried in the middle of the pile between the essays by Kloppenborg and Pokorný.

Holmén tries to make sense of the disarray of opinions and methodologies in an essay entitled “A Metalanguage for the Historical Jesus Methods” (pp. 589ff.), which appears at the end of Part One of the volume. It is the only piece by the editors in all four volumes that seeks to summarize or interpret the collection of essays. In this essay, Holmén offers a comprehensive summary of the vocabulary and approaches employed in the previous essays, hoping to illumine in some way the diverse methods featured in the volume. He examines the authors’ contexts, their sources and handling of sources, their organization, interpretation, and so forth. This is followed by an attempted demonstration of how the contributors progress from question to answer and a proposal that Holmén’s metalanguage be adopted by the scholarly community as a way of clarifying and better understanding the contours of the plethora of methods (p. 611). Yet, as a summary, I found Holmén’s essay to be in some ways just as bewildering as the disarray of methods he was trying to clarify, even with his two (rather complicated) appendices.

Several of the essays suggest that there has developed a fair amount of skepticism toward the notion that traditional methods can offer historical “truth.” Several representative examples from Volume 1 may be cited in this regard. Allison is skeptical regarding the criteria for judging the authenticity of Jesus’ works and sayings. Charlesworth contends that 200 years of Jesus studies have shown that we cannot really know much about the past. Dunn is dissatisfied with several presuppositions that have characterized the historical study of Jesus from its inception. Horsley finds it “necessary to question and often abandon some of the basic assumptions, methods, and concepts of standard theologically based New Testament scholarship” (p. 207). Porter, likewise, questions the usefulness of the standard criteria of authenticity (p. 713). On the whole, Volume 1 covers and recovers the historical Jesus landscape so that even one who is unaware of much of the history behind Jesus studies will be educated in this regard. At the same time, readers who are uninitiated in subjects such as the history of interpretation of historical Jesus research since the Enlightenment or the Jesus Seminar would benefit by familiarizing themselves with basic components of Jesus studies before beginning to wade through these sometimes complicated essays. For the scholar, however, the essays serve as a comprehensive overview of the state of Jesus studies

to date, and the editors are hopeful that some of the contributions will even break new ground for the future. One of the newer developments is that scholars seem to be calling for a “Fourth Quest” (e.g. Baasland and Charlesworth; see also Paul Anderson, who is not included in the set). Owing to the subject matter (historiography, philosophy, methodology), readers will probably find Volume 1 the most complicated. However, it is essential reading for those who want to be able to digest the essays in the remaining volumes.

The second volume of the set, “The Study of Jesus,” focuses on Jesus research itself, looking at the past, present, and future of the discipline (Parts One and Two) as well as probing ongoing issues (Part Three). Part One (“Ongoing Quest”) focuses primarily on the past and present, containing essays that compare the present with past quests. Part Two (“Current Questions”) “brings to the fore questions that are being asked in the contemporary climate of historical Jesus studies” (p. xx). The conclusions in these essays, taking their point of departure from the past and the present, often depart from current scholarship and hope to serve as programmatic signposts for future research. Part Three (“Persisting Issues”) are those “perennial topics” that must be addressed by anyone who wishes to have an informed conversation about historical Jesus research. On the whole, Volume 2 seems to be the most diverse and representative of the current state of Jesus studies. Clive Marsh’s essay, “Diverse Agendas,” aptly illustrates this point. Marsh faces the fact that the “Quest for the historical Jesus” has never been solely about finding Jesus, but about achieving historical objectivity. He notes that, in the face of so many competing ideologies, assumptions, and philosophies, objectivity has proven elusive. That said, Volume 2 is probably the most helpful in the set for those who want to study the current landscape of historical Jesus research and learn about the future of the discipline. The volume in this sense certainly lives up to its expectation set by the editors.

The third volume “brings Jesus himself as a historical figure directly into the discussion” (p. xx). In this volume, the methodologies and trends discussed in the first two volumes are put to work in an investigation of the historical Jesus. Part One contains essays that look at Jesus as he is presented in each of the primary sources: various portions of the Synoptics, Q, Luke-Acts, John, the canonical epistles, the Gospel of Thomas, other apocryphal gospels, the patristic writings, and classical and Jewish writings. The essays in Part Two compose a critical analysis of virtually every aspect of Jesus’ life and ministry: his existence, social and topographical location in Palestine, chronology, birth, death, resurrection, family, friends, enemies, language, self-understanding, miracles, and parables. Part Three relates Jesus to Israel and contains essays placing Jesus “firmly within his Jewish context” (p. xx). Accordingly, this last collection explores topics of “Third Quest” interest such as Jesus as he is related to God, the Sabbath, the Temple, the *Shema*, and the Holy Land. Interestingly, there seems to be a shift from a more critical and progressive flavor in Part One (on the “documents”) to a more conservative stance in Part Two (“about Jesus”). The topics in this portion of the set were assigned to the contributors by the editors. Consequently, many of the authors acknowledge that their essays are based upon their earlier work or constitute summaries of it.

There seems to be general agreement that the Third Quest pursued Jesus as a strictly historical figure, as he really existed in Palestine, not in isolation off in a world of his own. Also, the authors commonly distinguish the Third Quest from theological work. However, some contributors point out that this distinction is either not strictly true or virtually impossible. Although the essays in Volume 3 are at the heart of the conclusions of Jesus studies, there do not appear to be many (if any) fresh contributions. In the main, Volume 3 features solid essays presenting the current state of Jesus scholarship.

Volume 4, finally, features several individual studies that did not fit neatly into the first three volumes. The editors intended this volume to be a sort of “catch-all” for those essays that were important to include but did not fit anywhere else. However, it seems that several of them could have been included in Volume 3 or other places in the set. For example, “Flawed Heroes” on *Gos. Thom.* 97 (p. 3023) could have easily been paired with “The Thomas-Jesus Connection” on *Gos. Thom.* 82 (p. 2059) in the section on sources in Volume 3. “Jesus and the Synagogue” (pp. 3105ff.) would have gone well alongside “Jesus and the Temple” (pp. 2635ff.) in the section placing Jesus in his Jewish environment in Volume 3. There are other examples where material in Volume 4—essays covering Jesus’ birth, life, and teachings—could have been logically placed in Volume 3 or elsewhere. Perhaps the reality is that Volume 3 was becoming too large—as it is, it is the bulkiest in the set, over 100 pages longer than Volume 2—and the editors decided to come up with another category. However, it may have been better to organize the series in such a way that Volumes 3 and 4 would have been combined under the single rubric, “The Historical Jesus,” and to place the more esoteric topics (such as “Jesus as Moving Image,” pp. 3155ff.) in a separate subcategory. In any case, the title of Volume 4, “Individual Studies,” is somewhat vague and nondescript.

While it is tempting to list my favorite essays at the conclusion of this all too brief review, I will resist such a temptation, because space is lacking to defend any such judgments. As a humble token of my appreciation for his friendship and life work, I dedicate this review to the memory of the late Harold Hoehner, long-time Professor of New Testament and director of Ph.D. Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, whose essay on the chronology of Jesus culminates a lifetime of painstaking research in the field. Harold was personally responsible for persuading me of an AD 33 date for Jesus’ crucifixion at one of the occasions at which our sabbaticals coincided at Tyndale House in Cambridge, England.

On the whole, the above-mentioned minor quibbles notwithstanding, the *HSHJ* is an amazing resource for historical Jesus studies. The essays are not married to current trends in Jesus studies and thus will not be passé in a few years. The contributions are thought-provoking reflections on the history of the discipline, with an eye toward the future. Both the breadth and the depth of the essays are quite remarkable. The amount of research, years of scholarly dialogue and experience, and erudite command of evidence represented in these four volumes are truly impressive. Holmén and Porter styled this collection after Schweitzer’s well-known attempt to gather “the bulk of the most important (mostly German) Jesus research done during the previous two centuries ... within one cover” (p. xv).

In one respect, at least, this collection even surpasses Schweitzer's work in that at this juncture in history there is far more research in the field than could possibly be included in one volume—or even in four!

Nevertheless, although this is a wonderful set, many will find it beyond their grasp in certain respects. To begin with, the \$1,329 list price puts it out of range for most budgets (although one can find the set at a better price; at the time of writing, Amazon sells it new for \$1,036.30 plus \$3.99 shipping). Second, the complexity of many of the essays will render their content difficult to digest for the non-specialist. Most (if not all) of the essays are written on the seminary-level or higher. Readers who plow their way through the essays will find that more than mere familiarity with the NT is often required to comprehend the material and to profit from these contributions. Readers will need to be familiar with the major figures in historical Jesus research and their contributions, historical criticism, redaction and form criticism, philosophies of historiography, methodological criteria, and so forth, and in one instance they must be able to read or translate German (Kuhn). For an interested reader who wants to explore Jesus studies for the first time, reading this set is like learning to swim in the deep end of the pool. I imagine the volumes will be almost exclusively purchased by academic libraries (and be owned by a handful of scholars who offer to write a review!) but not by the average pastor or seminarian.

Andreas J. Köstenberger

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC

Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Interpretive Theory. By Stanley E. Porter and Jason C. Robinson. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011, 308 pp., \$30.00 paper.

In the work *Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Interpretive Theory*, Stanley E. Porter has collaborated with his former student Jason C. Robinson to write an introduction to recent interpretive theory in a single volume. In doing so, they survey representative scholars chronologically from Friedrich Schleiermacher to contemporary scholars such as Kevin Vanhoozer and Alan Culpepper. Porter and Robinson skillfully demonstrate the interrelatedness of disparate theories. This is a clear strength of the book. Indeed, they achieve an expressed objective of not being “an inclusive survey that runs the risk of moving too quickly over the surface of admittedly complex issues and ideas, or a specialized volume on a single topic that lacks the kind of breadth require by the topic, but a volume that provides critical analysis of (admittedly restricted) major movements and figures in hermeneutics and interpretive theory in the modern era” (p. xvi).

In the first chapter, entitled “What Is Hermeneutics?,” the authors provide an informative introduction, and then, rather unnaturally, commit a full page to preview each subsequent chapter. While an overview is important for orienting the reader, more succinct summaries in chapter 1 would have provided more space later for explaining views that are challenging to grasp. Chapter 2 introduces the reader to Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey, who revolutionized the