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Review: The Jesus Quest: the Third
Search for the Jew of Nazareth

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teaching on divorce, and to the eschatological saying about the thief coming in the night all point in the direction of a connection. Wenham goes beyond this evidence, however, to provide a detailed investigation of Paul's more subtle echoes of Jesus' teaching. Taken alone, these allusions to the Jesus tradition look like unimpressively coincidental references to common themes, but together, says Wenham, they form a cumulative case that is difficult to refute. For example, Wenham maintains that the connection between Paul's letters and Jesus' teaching on the kingdom goes deeper than Paul's 13 explicit references to the kingdom indicate. Might not Paul's claim that the Thessalonians 'received the word with joy' in 1 Thessalonians 1:6 reflect the parable of the sower? Are not Paul's comments about eating certain foods in Romans 14:14; 1 Corinthians 6:12-13; and Colossians 2:21-22 echoes of Jesus' teaching on human traditions and the cleanness of one's heart? In his two concluding chapters, Wenham suggests that when the evidence for Paul's familiarity with the outline of Jesus' career is combined with the evidence for Paul's familiarity with discrete blocks of Jesus' teaching, the probability grows that Paul knew a narrative form of the gospel not dissimilar to the canonical Gospels. This important part of Wenham's case is reminiscent of C.H. Dodd's answer to the form-critical approach to Gospel origins, especially as Rudolf Bultmann articulated it. Wenham now adds his voice to Dodd's by cautiously suggesting that the origins of the gospel genre lie in the attempt of the Gospel writers to fill out the earliest preaching of Jesus' story. If that is true, then Paul, as an early preacher, would have surely been deeply indebted to the story of Jesus in his own evangelistic preaching and ethical teaching. The persuasiveness with which Wenham argues his case, and the far-reaching implications of his thesis for both gospel and Pauline studies, make this book a significant contribution to both fields. The

student of the Gospels will discover here a compelling argument for the conservative preservation of Jesus traditions among the earliest churches, and the student of Paul will find a persuasive case for the theological indebtedness of Paul to those traditions. For these reasons, this study deserves a wide readership among students and professional scholars alike, and promises to make an enduring contribution to the theological study of the NT.

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The Making of the New Testament: Origin, Collection, Text & Canon

Arthur G. Patzia
Leicester: Apollos/IVP,
1995, 205 pp., pb.

On page 14 of *The Making of the New Testament*, Patzia states that '[T]his book is a *summary* of current and relevant New Testament scholarship. It is written primarily for nonspecialists - students and laypersons who desire to know how the New Testament came into being but who do not have the time, opportunities or resources to research this type of material'. The author does a remarkable job in accomplishing these goals. Patzia has produced a clear, lucid and comprehensive beginning introduction to matters concerning the origin and formation of the NT canon, textual criticism, and historical criticism.

The Making of the New Testament is divided into seven parts. Part One establishes the foundation of the book by discussing the literary world and background of the NT. Topics introduced here include the Hebrew Scriptures, the Septuagint, the OT Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Greco-Roman literature. Parts Two, Three and Four, dealing with the Gospels, Pauline literature, and other NT

literature respectively, focus upon considerations such as source, form and redaction criticism, the synoptic problem, the collection of Paul's letters, and the Muratorian fragment. Part Five presents the criteria of canonicity, including the authority of the words of Jesus, apostolicity, church usage, orthodoxy and inspiration, and concludes with an excursus on the arrangement of the NT books. Parts Six and Seven, which turn to matters concerning paleography and textual criticism, provide a good discussion on the writing and transmission of manuscripts and subsequent textual variation.

Among the other helpful aids this work provides for the reader, including five brief appendices of relevant material, a glossary, comprehensive endnotes and a select bibliography, Patzia has filled its pages with very useful tables and charts. Ranging from comparisons of the synoptic material and outlines of Pauline letter structure to diagrams detailing the transmission and geographical spread of the NT text, these illustrations further add to the book's clarity of presentation. Also commendable is Patzia's openness to consider and present differing views and positions. An apt summary is found in the words of George R. Beasley-Murray, who writes the foreword to *The Making of the New Testament*: 'It is good that the publication of such clear teaching is now available to a wider readership, and I warmly commend it to such.'

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The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth

Ben Witherington III
Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press,
1995, 304 pp., \$19.99

The historical Jesus may well be the centrepiece of contemporary religious dialogue. Commentators on both the theological right and left, as well as in between, have honed their professional skills on this increasingly popular

topic. As a result, a wide array of interpretations of Jesus has appeared on the modern marketplace.

Ben Witherington is not only a contributor to this discussion through a couple of previous volumes, but has now followed his earlier work with an overview of the current scene. *The Jesus Quest* is a serious attempt to catalogue what is now widely known as the third search for the historical Jesus, as indicated in the subtitle of this book.

A preface that provides a very brief survey of the two earlier quests in the nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries is followed by a chapter that discusses Jesus' Galilean social setting. Witherington's successive chapters categorize the various volumes of contemporary Jesus studies in terms of the chief motif of each.

Accordingly, Witherington devotes the next two chapters to the Jesus Seminar and the cynic sage hypothesis. Subsequent chapters deal, respectively, with approaches that characterize Jesus as a holy man and teacher, an eschatological prophet, a social reformer, a sage, and as some type of messianic figure. The book closes with a summary, including future prospects for Jesus studies, and an epilogue that considers Raymond Brown's work on the death of Jesus.

Throughout the volume, Witherington addresses the best-known representatives of these various positions, with his discussion forming a mosaic of scholars that cross the entire theological spectrum. From John Dominic Crossan, Burton Mack and Marcus Borg, to Geza Vermes, E. P. Sanders and John P. Meier, to N. T. Wright and himself, the major third quest works are surveyed.

One indispensable part of the volume, especially in an age that sometimes eschews critical interaction, is that Witherington offers painstaking analyses of each emphasis. One of the strongest critiques is reserved for the Jesus Seminar (Chapter 2), which is critiqued in areas such as the

composition of the group and the claims they make for themselves, their criteria of authenticity, their confident use of non-canonical writings, and their general ignoring of the theological (and especially eschatological) nature of Jesus' teachings.

Witherington summarizes: 'In particular, Jesus is denuded of his historical context, and his sayings are stripped of their literary settings' (p. 42). Later he amusingly concludes: 'We simply add that this seminar Jesus will not preach, did not come to save and likely will not last' (p. 57).

Witherington is also hard on the somewhat related view that Jesus was a cynic philosopher (Chapter 3). He singles out F. Gerald Downing (pp. 62 - 63) in a chapter that is otherwise chiefly concerned with the writings of John Dominic Crossan, critiquing several themes of the latter. Witherington comments about the cynic sage thesis that it 'dies with death of too many qualifications' (p. 72).

While some contemporary approaches to the historical Jesus are rejected, others are thought to be more accurate. Throughout, one of Witherington's most frequent comments is that many attempts provide *partial* pictures of Jesus (pp. 115, 142, 151, 160, 180, 186, 232). He concludes that several emphases should be combined for the best representation (p. 185).

The strengths of Witherington's text are many. It takes pains to explain in detail the smorgasbord of attempts to interpret the historical Jesus, and does so quite readably. It covers a wide variety of both categories and commentators, offering very helpful endnotes that could easily serve as a basis for extended studies.

Themelios readers will probably find few reasons to complain about this text, and most objections would probably seem rather picky. It is true that the first two quests are relegated to less than four pages of the Preface. While it was not the author's intention to survey these

movements in detail, a little more background would doubtless assist those without specific knowledge, especially where such would be very helpful in understanding current trends. For example, a relevant backdrop would enlighten the discussion of subjects like the various criteria commonly used in determining the authentic sayings of Jesus (pp. 46 - 48).

Still, Witherington's work is the closest we have to the part played almost 100 years ago by Albert Schweitzer's classic *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. Though without the same amount of detail, this volume is still a worthy guide through the intricate research maze now known as the third quest for the historical Jesus.

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Augustine, His Thought in Context

T. Kermit Scott
New York/Mahway, NJ: Paulist Press,
253pp., \$14.95

Dr Scott teaches philosophy at Purdue University, and has long been interested in Augustine. One senses that, given the shape of Augustine's central teaching as he understands them, he is both bemused and even a little irritated that the African father continues to fascinate so many moderns. The book comprises three somewhat discrete parts. The first sketches 'Augustine's World', with a particular eye on the triumph of Christianity in and over the Roman Empire. By the time Augustine became bishop, although competition from other cults had not ceased, the Christian victory was beyond doubt. It was accompanied by a two-way accommodation in ideology, with Christian thinkers emerging as ideologists of the Empire by means of a theology that appealed to both 'gentlemen' (a favourite term) and the masses.

In the second part Scott traces Augustine's adoption of 'the imperial myth', the key to which is his concept of God as emperor, supremely powerful and beneficent. This theology served the interests of the ruling gentry but also met with universal satisfaction. Scott finds this myth in Augustine's early work *On Free Will*, which was finished by the year 395 when he became bishop in Hippo. It is a bold interpreter of Augustine who affirms that by this time his conception of God was 'complete' - not least in the light of the long and slightly embarrassed entry he devotes to this work three decades later in his *Revisions (Retractationes)*. While the main lineaments of the Augustinian theology seem to be soundly drawn, I question the wisdom of labelling it 'imperial' - without at least taking full measure of the *City of God's* deliberate demythologizing of the Roman state. I note that Robert Markus's *Saeculum* is not among Scott's sources (although he provides neither bibliography nor author index). To present Augustine's imperial-myth theology as the one that would dominate the West for centuries fails to take account of his abandonment (after *On Free Will*) of a Eusebian-type reading of Roman imperial history, and of that pervasive medieval misreading of the *City of God* for which Orosius was not a little to blame.

'Augustinianism', in the sense of what was once called 'the doctrines of grace', is the subject of part three. At its core for Scott is the absolute supremacy of God and the absolute dependence of human beings on his mercy. He spends most of this part analysing Augustine's view of predestination, which he regards him as holding in the strongest forms. 'There is no event which is such that God *permits* it to occur but does not actively choose and will it to occur.' Again Scott believes that Augustine's doctrine of predestination was finalized by 396, although he does look forward as far as *On the Spirit and the Letter*, one of his first anti-Pelagian works of 412. Scott's chief interest lies in demonstrating the compatibility of this 'strongest possible' variety of

predestinarianism (a surprising claim in itself: Calvin parallels reprobation and election-to-life much more consistently than Augustine, perhaps in a 'super-strongest' form) with his developed understanding of freedom of will. The author's analysis of the latter is one of the most satisfying sections of the book. But he has not provided evidence which would justify the breathtaking assertion that Augustine's God not only permits every sin that is perpetrated but 'actively chooses and wills it to occur'.

This, then, is a less than fully persuasive account of Augustine's thought. It will appeal most to the philosophically theologically minded. 'E. R. Dods' is a conflation of Marcus Dods, translator of Augustine in the late 1800s, and E. R. Dodds, his psycho-analytical interpreter a century later.

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The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann

Richard Bauckham
Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark,
1995, xi + 276 pp., £12.95.

In 1987, Richard Bauckham published an introduction of Moltmann's thought up to 1979 (*Moltmann, Messianic Theology in the Making*, Marshall Pickering). Now a collection of essays takes us up to 1993. It differs from the first volume in being a less systematic approach to the literature, highlighting key themes and providing a more critical engagement, in contrast with the dominantly expository mode of the earlier work.

Many of these essays have been published before in some form. They work through the themes of divine suffering and theodicy; political theology and ecclesiology; Trinity and Christology; creation, evolution and mysticism. The whole is prefaced by an overview of Moltmann's theology, which is a good general introduction to his thought. It is immediately followed by 'Theology of Hope Revisited', but in one way that seminal first work of