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## Review of *Telling Tales about Jesus: An Introduction to the New Testament Gospels*

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Blackwell claims that he shapes his fine and important study methodologically on ideas from Hans-Georg Gadamer, Hans Robert Jauss, and Quentin Skinner (Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* [2nd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1975]; Jauss, “Goethe’s and Valéry’s Faust: On the Hermeneutics of Question and Answer,” in idem, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* [trans. Timothy Bahti; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982] 110-38; idem, “Horizon Structure and Dialogicity,” in idem, *Question and Answer: Forms of Dialogic Understanding* [trans. Michael Hays; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989] 197-231; idem, “Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory,” in *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, 3-45); Quentin Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas,” in idem, *Visions of Politics*, vol. 1, *Regarding Method* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002] 57-89), in particular the idea that authors explicitly or implicitly address questions in their own historical contexts. Yet B. deals with this methodological idea in only the most general of ways. The contextual setting for Irenaeus and Cyril he identifies as “battles related to the nature of God and Christ” (p. 259) and for Paul it is “his close relationship to Judaism” (p. 259). More careful and specific historical contextual distinctions are not made, in particular they are not made between the various Pauline letters that B. studies. He gives attention to the literary context but not to the historical one. While B. makes plain that he is not doing a historical-critical study, what he does not adequately clarify is the difference between acknowledging and investigating the importance of historical context in a historical-critical study and such an acknowledgment and investigation based on the work of the methodological theoreticians he has chosen.

In the second of B.’s excellent guiding questions for his study of Paul, he states, “Paul’s soteriology is frequently characterized as being ‘already/not yet’” (p. 112). Without further ado, he proceeds to investigate which aspects of soteriological change take place in the “already” and which await the “not yet.” B. assumes without argument the “already/not yet” presentation of Pauline soteriology/eschatology, using terms that have arisen in this interpretative stream, such as “the overlap of ages” (p. 133), and coining some of his own, such as the “present/future dialectic” (p. 143). While one monograph cannot do all things, this admirable work would have been strengthened if B. had spent some time arguing for this organizing assumption.

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WARREN CARTER, *Telling Tales about Jesus: An Introduction to the New Testament Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016). Pp. xii + 291. Paper \$39.

*Telling Tales about Jesus* provides a brief yet substantive survey of the major aspects of the four canonical Gospels. Carter begins with a treatment of genre and the claim that the Gospels are *sui generis*, emphasizing that “[a] unique genre, even if it existed, would be incomprehensible” (p. 4). He categorizes the Gospels as ancient biographies on the basis of characteristics that they share with ancient examples of that genre, as well as with one another. C. nonetheless points out some features that distinguish the Gospels among ancient

biographies: “The Gospels . . . were biographies with a twist—written primarily not for elite audiences but for nonelites, not to celebrate a socially high-status individual who furthered dominant elite values and practice, but about a paradoxical figure of low social status and marginal within Rome’s world, yet who is presented as central to God’s purposes for the world” (p. 19).

The second chapter explores the reasons the Gospels should be dated after the year 70. Inset boxes offer quotations from primary sources outside the NT, such as Josephus and Tacitus, as well as other useful information. It is unfortunate that the saying about the Son of Man being lord of the Sabbath is simply assumed to represent an addition to the saying about the Sabbath being made for human beings rather than vice versa, without mentioning the possibility that that saying in Aramaic was simply a summary of what preceded it (p. 35). Turning to orality, C. introduces a discussion of Q, saying that this material could have been either oral or written. Research by Robert K. McIver and others, however, has provided evidence for the limitation of human memory, unaided by written texts, to reproduce extended sequences of words verbatim, which makes it far more likely that the Q material represented a written source. Be that as it may, the explanations not just about the evidence for Q and its contents and message, but even the conventions for citing it, make the overall treatment of this hypothetical source a good brief introduction for students.

The chapters that follow provide overviews of the four canonical Gospels, each Gospel being covered in two chapters. Treating Mark, C. highlights the persistent failure of Jesus’s disciples to grasp his power and authority. The cross seems initially to represent the victory of Rome over Jesus after he has been accused of sedition. Yet the resurrection vindicates Jesus’s trust in God and vouchsafes his eschatological glory and authority. C. claims that Joseph of Arimathea gives Jesus an honorable burial (p. 73), which is far from obvious. When some areas of scholarly debate are highlighted and explored, simple assertions that obscure similar scholarly disagreement in other areas give the impression of consensus, making the book at least somewhat less useful as an introduction to the subject matter. C. introduces the concept of *plot* when he turns to the Gospel of Matthew, emphasizing the role that connecting words play in allowing us to trace plot development. He views this Gospel as structured around six kernel passages and the larger narrative blocks in which those are embedded. C.’s presentation of the Gospel of Luke begins with reference to the game show *Jeopardy!*, the point being that in the Gospel we are given answers, while readers and interpreters need to deduce from them what the questions were. The second chapter, on Luke, explores a number of themes, in particular the kingdom of God and the role of women. The treatment of the Gospel of John begins by highlighting its distinctiveness in comparison with the Synoptics. After considering some alternatives, the paradigm of Jesus as Wisdom is embraced as the best way to account for this Gospel’s distinctive language and emphases. The conclusion discusses the canonization of these four Gospels to the exclusion of others and touches very briefly on the quest for the historical Jesus. Each chapter ends with questions for review and reflection, which ask readers to recall what they have learned so far and to formulate and begin to explore broader questions that emerge from the book’s contents. A variety of black-and-white images are included, most of which are artistic depictions of scenes from Gospel narratives. A glossary and topical index bring the book to a close.

Books on even just one of the Gospels that run less than three hundred pages are considered succinct, so C.'s introduction, whatever criticism one might offer on certain details, still represents an impressive balancing act between brevity and comprehensiveness. It will definitely provide a useful textbook for courses on the four Gospels or could serve as one of several textbooks for courses covering the entirety of the NT.

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J. P. DAVIES, *Paul among the Apocalypses: An Evaluation of the "Apocalyptic Paul" in the Context of Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Literature* (LNTS 562; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016). Pp. ix + 219. \$120.

This volume contributes to a fourth wave of contemporary scholarly reflection on the nature and meaning of the apostle Paul's apocalypticism. The first wave began, as Davies shows (chap. 1), with Ernst Käsemann's announcement (mid-twentieth century) that "apocalyptic is the mother of all Christian theology" ("The Beginnings of Christian Theology," in idem, *New Testament Questions of Today* [London: SCM, 1960] 102). Central to that claim was Käsemann's reading of Paul's righteousness of God as "a power which brings salvation to pass" (ibid., 181). Corporate and cosmic deliverance, then, not the existential decision of the Bultmannian individual, was for Käsemann the driving apocalyptic insight of Paul's theology. The next generation, a second wave, produced two influential scholars deeply indebted to Käsemann's "apocalyptic Paul"—J. Christiaan Beker and J. Louis Martyn. These two agreed about the centrality of apocalypticism to Paul, but, whereas Beker saw salvation-historical continuity in Paul's apocalyptic eschatology, Martyn saw a radically disjunctive dualism between the ages marked not by linear continuities but by God's punctiliar "invasion" of the "present evil age," an invasion independent of conditions (or covenants) in the present scene. Martyn's innovative reading generated a third wave of Pauline interpreters active today who work broadly within Martyn's apocalyptic hermeneutic. Three of these third-wave scholars—Martinus C. de Boer, Beverly Roberts Gaventa, and Douglas A. Campbell, dubbed by D. the "Union school" to mark their association with Union Theological Seminary—are principal subjects of D.'s fourth-wave critique of the Union school.

A persistent criticism of the Union school is that the radical discontinuities it claims as leading features of Paul's apocalyptic vision set him significantly at odds with the Jewish apocalyptic tradition he is supposed to represent. D. partially shares this criticism and wants to hold interpreters of Paul to what he sees as a higher standard of contextual assessment—Paul within his apocalyptic context—in order to avoid "dislocating him from (his) cultural-formative context" (p. 34). Toward this end, D. selects three Second Temple-period Jewish apocalyptic texts (*1 Enoch*, *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch*) and the Christian Book of Revelation as sites for discerning Paul's conceptual affinities with Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic. Specifically, he wants to show "what the apocalyptic context actually says" about four themes—epistemology, eschatology, cosmology, and soteriology—that "distil central motifs of the debate over the 'apocalyptic Paul'" (p. 38). In chaps. 2–5 D. take up these themes, one per chapter, first outlining the "new" apocalyptic perspective on the theme and