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Charles W. Hedrick. *When History and Faith Collide: Studying Jesus*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999. Pp. xix + 166. \$16.95 (Paper).

[1] New Testament educators and scholars seeking a text that identifies and engages the issues resulting from the historical-theological collision of the study of Jesus of Nazareth will find a useful guide in Charles W. Hedrick's *When History and Faith Collide: Studying Jesus*. Hedrick surveys the similarities and clashes within the canonical gospels as well as texts such as the *Gospel of Thomas*, offers extensive notes, sites other useful sources, and provides provoking questions for study and reflection. Whether he achieves his stated task of providing a useful introductory text with which undergraduates will be able to further explore the study of Jesus is less certain for this reader.

[2] *When History and Faith Collide* was prompted for Hedrick by the ever-widening gap between Jesus as "Jewish man" and "Christian Lord." The book presents an inductive study of the earliest documents witnessing to the life and sayings of Jesus of Nazareth. Hedrick invites readers to compare and contrast these writings and to analyze them as first century writings. Through such an approach to the study of Jesus, the author contends, students will come away with a "broader understanding, and a deeper appreciation for the complementary relationship between faith and history" (xiii). Several critical issues are raised at the end of the introduction. These issues outline the questions the author intends a student will answer for him or herself through the completion of the study.

[3] The book's arrangement in nine chapters allows the reader to follow Hedrick's thesis and related issues in an organized manner. The first chapter, "History and Faith," introduces the conflicting perspectives between historical theology, religious history, and the twentieth century secular history through which most U.S. students are educated. From Hedrick's viewpoint, the conflicting perspectives, as well as society's subjective valuation of nonreligious over religious histories, validate the task of harmonizing faith and history in the following chapters. Given his foundational assumptions, the author continues in chapter two, "Jesus and the Gospels in the Twentieth Century," with an overview of the modern developments in New Testament research, including simplified descriptions of form, redaction, and literary criticism. Beginning students will require additional instruction and

explanation of each. Chapters three through five - "Jesus in the Gospels in the First Century," "Diversity among the Gospels," and "Explaining the Diversity and Similarities in the Gospels" - offer exactly what their titles suggest. The portrayals of Jesus in the four canonical gospels and the *Gospel of Thomas* are summarized, the primary differences among the synoptic gospels and John are outlined (i.e. birth and resurrection narratives), and several approaches to explaining and reconciling these differences - deemed theological, historical, and harmonizing by Hedrick - are presented. The following three chapters address additional layers of complexity: the question of the Q source for the material unique to Matthew and Luke, the likely effects of the early oral Christian tradition on written transmissions, and the unknown influence of early Christian prophets on the resulting gospel texts. Readers will appreciate the clear and careful comments in these chapters.

[4] Rather than resolving the issues he has raised, Hedrick begins the final chapter, "Searching for Jesus among the Christs of Early Christian Faiths," by acknowledging the unpromising prospect of constructing an accurate and widely acceptable account of the historical life of Jesus of Nazareth. However, assuming that there is historical material to be found in the gospels and that reconstruction of Jesus' life utilizing such material is valuable, Hedrick offers several criteria for evaluating the gospels and other works. The Christs among early Christian faith traditions overshadowed the person of Jesus and in some ways ignored him. Because of this reality, Hedrick concludes that for a "historical faith," one must have knowledge of the historical Jesus. "The quest for the historical man keeps the personal history of Jesus from being swallowed up in Christology and mythology, and ensures that the kerygma of the church is anchored in the history of the first century" (151).

[5] As the contemporary quest for the historical Jesus pervades both New Testament studies and the spirituality shelves of secular bookstores, Hedrick offers a significant contribution to those willing to engage in their own historical quest. Rather than attempting to articulate a history, the author effectively identifies and addresses the complexities of doing so. Hedrick provides a tremendous number of recommended readings that will enhance any historical study of Jesus. His clear and concise presentation invites the reader to study further and to develop personal skills in textual critique and evaluation.

[6] The disillusionment and confusion that beginning students encounter when first grappling with the problematic reality of the collision between faith and history in the study of Jesus is very real, and Hedrick appropriately targets this audience with *When History and Faith Collide*. However, the material is more appropriate for advanced or independent students. The questions following each chapter tend to require additional reading and experience beyond the chapter itself. Teachers of New Testament studies may find the book to be more useful as an outline for the content of their own instruction about the difficulties associated with the historical Jesus rather than as a course text. Because students will need access to significantly more information than the book offers, this reader questions the appropriateness of the book for use with undergraduates on an introductory level.

[7] Despite uncertainty about the book's most appropriate audience, Hedrick's conclusion is both compelling and hopeful: Christianity's ongoing integrity demands a rootedness in the first century history of Jesus of Nazareth. Teachers of the historical Jesus will gratefully utilize this work of an educational ally for its succinct summaries and invaluable references.

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