

more than a little imaginative to see the nexus between these two factors. Secondly, some ideas are left inconclusive. For example, Mercado, following Harvey Cox (*Fire From Heaven*, Addison-Wesley, 1995) claims that the future of Christianity points toward Pentecostalism (121, 140). He does not fully flesh out this notion in the El Shaddai movement. Finally, for such a major publication this book has far too many grammatical, editorial, and spelling problems. Despite these, I think that the trained scholar, especially in missiology, will find this book useful.

Kenneth D. Mulzac

Van Voorst, Robert E. *Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence*. Studying the Historical Jesus. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. xiv + 248 pp.

Robert E. Van Voorst is professor of New Testament at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan. He has previously authored several other works, including what is no doubt his most widely used book, *Building Your Greek New Testament Vocabulary* (Eerdmans, 1990). In this work, Van Voorst contributes to the series Studying the Historical Jesus, which attempts to understand Jesus not so much theologically as historically. Questions of faith aside, what is the historical evidence for Jesus of Nazareth, who was called the Christ? Van Voorst explores the evidence in the ancient noncanonical sources, both classical Greco-Roman and Jewish writings. He also discusses Jesus in the hypothetical, reconstructed sources of the canonical Gospels and in the post-NT Christian writings.

Van Voorst begins by acknowledging the work done before him, including arguments for the nonhistoricity of Jesus, concluding that “the theory of Jesus’ nonexistence is now effectively dead as a scholarly question” (14). In support of this conclusion, he summarizes the main arguments used against the nonexistence hypothesis as it has been articulated by George A. Wells.

Not only does Van Voorst quote (in English) the various sources which offer testimony concerning the historicity of Jesus, but he offers a careful scholarly evaluation of the credibility of each of these sources. This sober evaluation of the various sources is what makes this work especially valuable for students interested in the historicity of Jesus.

As one might expect, the different traditions reflect different portraits of Jesus. In the classical Greco-Roman sources, Jesus was primarily a *troublemaker* who was executed for His crimes (73-74). In the Jewish sources, He was primarily a *magician and deceiver* who “founded and led a movement that tried to lead Israel away from the one true God and his Torah” (134). In the hypothetical sources of the canonical Gospels, no single portrait can be found, but each reputed source has a unique picture of Jesus which is a subset of the portrait of Jesus found in the respective canonical Gospels from which the sources have been reconstructed (176-77). In the Christian writings after the NT, the evidence is too controversial

in many cases to be certain of the validity of the traditions they record, but these writings do point to the NT as the most authentic account of the history of Jesus.

The chapter on the hypothetical sources behind the canonical Gospels presents an interesting assessment of historicity. Given the fact that none of these documents actually exist but are mere hypothetical reconstructions based on a study of the Gospels, it is somewhat surprising to see them evaluated as noncanonical evidence for the historicity of Jesus that is independent from the witness of the Gospels. The results, however, are not so surprising, since the hypothetical sources are, *prima facie*, reconstructed based on certain selective characteristics which are assumed to distinguish them from the other Gospel materials. What kind of independent historical witness can these purported sources offer that cannot be found in the Gospels themselves, except to confirm the distorted, selective portraits created by the reconstruction process postulated by the critics? There is a strong element of circular reasoning involved in such a process.

The book is a valuable contribution to Jesus studies. The collection of the various sources in a readable English translation is helpful, but the scholarly evaluation and summary of the evidence makes this a most useful compendium of the ancient evidence for Jesus from outside the NT. For those who would like to add historical evidence to the faith testimony of the Gospels and other NT sources, I recommend this book.

Edwin E. Reynolds

Vyhmeister, Nancy Jean. *Quality Research Papers: For Students of Religion and Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001. ix + 228 pp.

This work is the culmination of many years of guiding research and writing for Nancy Vyhmeister, recently retired from Andrews University, where she taught research and writing and served as editor of *Andrews University Seminary Studies*. She also recently edited the book *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives* (Andrews University Press, 1998).

Vyhmeister first compiled a guide for research writing in Spanish while teaching theology students in South America. Later she reworked it in English for the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies in the Philippines, where it became the approved style guide for the seminary for a number of years. When Vyhmeister moved to Andrews University in Michigan and began teaching research for the seminary there, she determined to revise and update her research guide again. This book is the result. One can thus see this work as the product of extended experience and reassessment of the task and methodology of research and writing.

The book covers all the essential areas of research and writing for students of religion and theology, with examples given for each step in the research and writing process. It begins with a discussion of what research entails, then progresses in logical sequence through the various steps that are necessary in the process of