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Hidden sayings of Jesus: words attributed to Jesus outside the four Gospels

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both time and space considering how the biblical authors themselves use scripture, and investigating such ancient methods as the *sensus plenior*, modern approaches such as deconstruction, and paying particular attention throughout to the contribution made by various hermeneutics of suspicion. In fact, this book would also make a nice preacher's companion to Robert Grant and David Tracy's *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*.

The book's seventeen chapters are divided into four sections, corresponding to the division of genres, and within each section, Goldingay considers his chosen interpretive models. One strategy for using the book might be to read the opening paragraph of each chapter. Here Goldingay poses some general questions for each model and something of the trajectory he will take in his dialogue with it. One quickly infers that Goldingay himself favours an interpretive approach which (a) rests on historical critical exegesis; (b) assumes an authoritative "place one might stand" to evaluate interpretation; and (c) favours expository preaching (it would have been good for him to admit these preferences more explicitly). Of course, these preferences are widely shared, and one strength of the book for most "mainline" preachers and teachers is that Goldingay's questions are similar to those we ourselves would ask (or have asked!). This reader did find his treatment of other models open, and even-handed, though readers more fully committed to philosophical, "suspicious", or "pre-critical" approaches may find Goldingay's preferences a stumbling block.

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Hidden Sayings of Jesus: Words attributed to Jesus outside the four Gospels

William Morrice

Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997

250 pages

This book presents "a fairly comprehensive, though not exhaustive" collection of 253 extracanonical sayings of Jesus in English, each graded from A to D according to its probable authenticity. It includes a brief survey of the formation of the New Testament canon and a rationale of the author's methodology. The individual sayings, each followed by a very brief commentary, are drawn from a wide range of sources, including New Testament variant readings, the Gospel of Thomas, apocryphal gospels, early patristic literature, and the Koran.

From the vast storehouse the author evidently selected those sayings which he considered most likely to be authentic. Morrice distinguishes between external and internal tests of authenticity. Although he avoids the traditional technical terminology, his external tests correspond roughly to the criterion of multiple attestation and his internal tests are approximately equivalent to the criteria of dissimilarity and cohesion of the "Second Quest".

In his assessment, it is the criterion of cohesion which seems to carry most weight. "Those [sayings] that are virtually identical with the canonical text...will normally be marked with an A. Where a saying is very close to one or more in the New Testament, it is quite possibly authentic and will be marked with a B. Where it is obviously true to the spirit of Jesus as we know that from our reading of the New Testament but there is no clear canonical parallel, it will be given a C rating" (25). The grades range from "most likely authentic" (A), "some doubt" (B), "more doubtful" (C), to "the most doubtful" (D).

One wonders what the author means by "authentic", since he evidently considers all the sayings of Jesus in the New Testament to belong to this category, thus disregarding the findings of redaction critical and historical Jesus research. The problem is compounded by the fact that these (assumed to be) authentic sayings become the standard by which the authenticity of extra-canonical sayings is measured.

The Gospel of Thomas supplies the bulk of the sayings covered in this book (55-140). Thomas is not gnostic, argues Morrice, but encratite, and he holds that the encratite orientation is foreign to the spirit of Jesus, and that all sayings which show traces of it must be graded D. When these criteria are applied, reports Morrice, the resulting profile of the authentic sayings "is broadly in line with the portraits drawn by New Testament writers" (215). One might have expected as much, since "one of the main criteria of authenticity that has been applied is compatability [sic] with what we already know of Jesus from the canonical gospels" (216). A circular argument?

The book is aimed at the "general readership" (vii). The specialist will lament the author's imprecision. Yet the lay person, too, may be left in the lurch. Does the educated non-specialist have enough background to be able to deal with sentences like: "the absence [in Thomas] of the allegorical interpretation found in all three synoptic gospels confirms the view that it was the work of the early Church though it may well be true to the mind of Jesus" (73)?

The book shows that a wide variety of sayings have been attributed to Jesus and that the authenticity of such sayings is not to be taken for granted. This will give lay persons something to think about.