

Anthony Giambrone, OP, *A Quest for the Historical Jesus: Scientia Christi and the Modern Study of Jesus*

(Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2022), pp. xx + 448. \$34.95.

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This is a riveting book, which combines fascinating historical, meta-critical and theological observations in a sometimes polemical tone. It is a compilation of fifteen previously published essays with an introduction and two appendices. As such it is not a sustained argument but as its introduction makes clear, the author, Anthony Giambrone, believes that the individual parts constitute an opening salvo (what he terms ‘interrelated and evocative trials’; p. 12) against the ‘sacrosanct secular distinction between the “historical Jesus” and the “Christ of faith”’ (p. 2). His project, stated otherwise, is to leap over Lessing’s ‘ugly ditch’, which has so often been invoked as the wall separating these two ideas. ‘For a longer time than is now pleasant to remember, this domain of knowledge of Jesus has become a sterile field void of ecclesial harvest, limited ... by an academy unilluminated by faith (sadly even in certain theology and, as a matter of principle, in all religious studies departments)’ (p. 5). In all of this Giambrone sees himself as following the tradition of his place of employment, the *École Biblique*, namely combining modern standards of historically informed exegetical rigour with a profound commitment to the truths of the Catholic faith and doctrine, incorporating a view of the Gospels in which ‘the literal and spiritual senses meet’ (p. 31). His book, then, is an attempt to occupy the fluid space between the academy and the church.

The book divides itself into three parts. Part 1 is titled ‘Historical Foundations’ and consists of five studies. The first, through a reading of *Dei Verbum* 19 from Vatican II, places the work firmly within a Catholic setting of the kind already referred to in the introduction, one in which the tradition and the Gospels are not seen as strangers who pass each other in the night, a task which will involve the ‘moderating of positivistic history’ (p. 49). The second is a deconstruction of Albert Schweitzer’s *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, a loose translation of the original German of the title (Schweitzer never used the word ‘Quest’) through which Giambrone shows up (via his long dead mentor, Marie-Joseph Lagrange, who founded the *École Biblique*) the essentially Protestant presuppositions of the so-called ‘quest’ (alluded to in the title of the book), which (following Lagrange) he holds to emerge from the radical Reformation, which is taken to anticipate a de-emphasis on doctrine and a scepticism about miracle. These chapters act as ground clearance for the next three chapters, which look at different facets of Jesus’ life (infancy narratives, ministry and resurrection) by taking seriously ancient rhetorical conventions and the question of truth, memory as memorialisation and evangelical reconfiguration of eyewitness testimony. Here, Luke emerges as a model of the kind of revitalised study of the Gospels Giambrone envisages, a Luke who exemplifies both the importance of eye-witnesses but also the limitations of historiography to whose truths one’s heart has to be opened.

Part 2 is titled 'Theological Perspectives' and involves, *inter alia*, a critique, via Newman and Kierkegaard, of Lessing's ditch (which would deny 'the whole testamentary value of the scriptures'; p. 145), as well as of the Christology of early high christologians, like Larry Hurtado and Richard Bauckham (especially the latter with his view that Jesus is part of the divine identity), by arguing for the legitimate and corrective application of classical conciliar christological thought to the Gospels. Two further essays argue in different ways for 'the irreducible and omnipresent and cosmological interests of the Greco-Roman/New Testament world' (p. 242), a claim which draws on some later Christian theologians like Origen and Athanasius closer to the New Testament than is traditionally thought to be the case. This section ends with a fascinating essay on the quasi-Chalcedonian character of temple theology in Second Temple Judaism ('... the double identification both with the Lord's exclusive oneness and a vast cosmic priesthood of exalted creatures rendered the Temple a unique kind of two-natured locus of divine encounter'; p. 258).

The final section is titled 'Jesus and the Scriptures'. In the first of the essays, titled '*Scientia Christi*', Giambrone sets out three theses. The first relates to the recovery of the messianic consciousness of Jesus, understood by Giambrone in terms of Jesus' self-identification with Israel's scriptures. The second is the abandonment of what he takes to be the regnant view of Jesus as a thoroughly apocalyptic figure; and the third is the need for the recovery of what Giambrone calls a Chalcedonian hermeneutic, which he goes on to develop in the chapters which follow, proposing in particular a high priestly Christology, which takes up ideas already presented in his understanding of the temple. The final chapter is an especially fascinating one in which Giambrone makes use of Jesus' apparent ignorance of the time of the end to eviscerate any idea that Jesus' life was predicated upon such an expectation in the way scholars often assume.

I have, sadly, been forced to give a fleeting account of a complicated and challenging volume. In many ways it is difficult to review precisely because Giambrone is attempting to lay the foundations of an approach to the figure of Jesus that seeks to overcome the hegemony of what he terms the 'sarkic dullards' (p. 31), those who exclude questions of theological truth from what he sees as their arid lucubrations (he likens the reading of much Gospel scholarship to the chewing of cardboard). Many will find his occasionally polemical tone disconcerting (the second appendix is a strikingly – and perhaps tellingly – critical review of Paula Fredriksen's *When Christians Were Jews*, presenting it as historically unconvincing and solipsistic, a sort of '*apologia pro vita mea*', which betrays the fact that it was written by an ex-Catholic who converted to Judaism), and others will blanch at what they will see as unjustified exegetical sleights of hand. Some will simply reject Giambrone's presuppositions and the whole enterprise (a kind of distinctive reapplication of Catholic *ressourcement* theology for New Testament studies) in which he is engaged. Bold books elicit strong reactions and Giambrone strikes me as a strong enough intellectual personality to tolerate strident refutation.

But his is not the boldness of a Kähler, or of a Barth, though at times the approach, even if it is an attempt to intercalate a Catholic hermeneutic into modern New Testament study, evokes something of the radicalism of these orthodox and neo-orthodox Protestants. The work is too much the product of a well-informed, New Testament scholar, both theologically and philosophically literate, to be compared with those essentially theological critics of a certain type of historicism; and this is seen in the way that the book bristles with intriguing historical-critical, as well as meta-critical, observations (the essay on Schweitzer's *Quest*, which is to some extent both

the shadow which hangs over the work and the ghost that, respectfully, Giambrone wants to exorcise). In other words, the book will not only lead the thoughtful *Neutestamentler* to reflect upon the presuppositions of their discipline, whether they assent or not to Giambrone's inchoate proposal; but also bring them face to face with interpretations of the New Testament and its world, which are both provocative and stimulating. To those who think a quest for the historical Christ (rather than an historical Jesus) is an absurdity for reasons too well known to be worth repeating (and which Giambrone criticises), this book will not change their mind and may well entrench them in their view. But to those who take seriously the theological underpinning of traditional New Testament studies, the book will be a welcome and challenging addition to the literature, even if a controversial one.

doi:10.1017/S0036930623000418

Steven J. Duby, *Jesus and the God of Classical Theism: Biblical Christology in Light of the Doctrine of God*

(Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022), pp. xx + 444. \$55.00.

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The question of the relation between the historical humanity of Jesus and God's eternal reality is a matter of central concern for all Christian theology. Specialists in biblical studies, philosophical theology, dogmatics and historical theology have all made substantive contributions on Jesus' divine identity. But keeping up with all these developments is no easy task, much less engaging in fruitful dialogue with representative voices from all of them. Steven Duby has undertaken this vital task in *Jesus and the God of Classical Theism*, offering a rigorous model of how the tools of Reformed scholasticism might connect and at times critique current trends.

Duby's work in this volume is a continuation of the project he has been developing in his previous two monographs, *Divine Simplicity: A Dogmatic Account* (Bloomsbury, 2015) and *God in Himself: Scripture, Metaphysics, and the Task of Christian Theology* (IVP Academic, 2019), and it should be read in light of that work. In particular, two key features of these earlier works play a significant role in *Jesus and the God of Classical Theism* but are largely assumed, requiring the reader to be familiar with the earlier arguments. First, Duby's pervasive proof-texting sits uneasily with the standards of argumentation in biblical studies as well as the movement of theological interpretation of scripture. Duby argues (in part from *concursum*) that one can read biblical passages in which qualities like immutability or simplicity are not overtly predicated to God with a dual purpose: they can (and should) be read both in their historical context *and* as indicators (often implicitly) of God's eternal nature (see *Divine Simplicity*, pp. 57–8). The resulting knowledge of God's nature ideally enriches and illuminates the biblical passage in its historical context, and appreciating the text's historical sense is necessary for proper inferences to theological claims. Second, Duby works on the