

BOOK REVIEW

McDonald, Lee Martin, *The Story of Jesus in History and Faith: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013). xx + 393 pp. Pbk. \$39.50.

Lee Martin McDonald holds a PhD from the University of Edinburgh. He was a professor of New Testament studies and the President of Acadia Divinity College before his retirement. He has authored, co-authored or edited several books and authored over 70 journal articles, book chapters and essays. McDonald's book is an attempt to show that historical-critical inquiry into Jesus enhances Christian faith. He intends to bridge the gap between a historical-critical perspective about Jesus and Christian faith.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part, 'History and the Historical Jesus', consists of one chapter. It explains the impact that the application of historical methodology to biblical texts had on confessional beliefs about the Bible. This first chapter defines and describes the nature of history and historical inquiry. McDonald notes the four most common historical assumptions historians use in their inquiry. He further elucidates the scholarly distinction between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. This historical inquiry has raised serious questions about God's activity in human history. McDonald notes that 'the New Testament writers affirm God's activities in history and supremely in his activity in the story of Jesus' life and fate. There is a theological as well as historical way to understand and appropriate that activity today' (p. 19). His starting premise is that 'God has acted in Jesus in a unique manner unparalleled in human history' (p. 35). He agrees that historical inquiry is of considerable value because Christianity is a historical religion. McDonald carefully sketches the quest for historical Jesus in its four known stages—the first quest, the no quest, the 'new quest' of the second quest and the so-called third quest. He discusses key scholars in every stage, providing substantial footnotes for those who are interested in studying it further. He then provides a brief description and evaluation of the criteria of authenticity.

The second part, 'Sources for Studying the Historical Jesus', consists of two chapters. Chapter 2, 'The Gospels: Their Relationships and Reliability', is the biggest chapter in this book, and it describes the Gospels as offering 'a sufficiently reliable portrait of Jesus with an interpretation of who he was' (p. 49). Chapter 3, 'Other Sources for Studying the Historical Jesus', examines the apocryphal gospels, Greco-Roman sources and Jewish traditions about Jesus. McDonald also includes a section on the valuable contribution made by archaeological discoveries to inquiry about the historical Jesus.

The third part, 'The Story of Jesus in History (Events and Teachings)', consists of four chapters including the concluding chapter. Chapter 4 tells the story of Jesus' birth based on Matthew and Luke's account, and also covers his early childhood, baptism, temptation and early Galilean ministry. It provides a modern evaluation of Jesus' miracles. McDonald also describes Jesus' message and his use of the Scriptures. Chapter 5 tells the story of Jesus from the transfiguration story to his burial. He carefully explains relevant Jewish context at various points in Jesus' story. McDonald explains what he believes to be the most significant events for the Church's proclamation about Jesus—his betrayal and trial, his death and burial. He uses a historical-critical methodology for his inquiry. Chapter 6 exclusively examines Jesus' resurrection. McDonald notes that it was in his resurrection that Jesus' message was authenticated and faith was cultivated in his disciples. In Chapter 7, he provides twenty-eight points summarizing his findings regarding Jesus in history, as well as a historical and theological explanation of Jesus' story.

McDonald should be commended for giving a scholarly account of the historical Jesus while not neglecting matters of faith and the theological significance of Jesus. McDonald's assessment of Jewish context and his use of archaeological evidences make a significant contribution to historical Jesus research. He engages with major scholars in both footnotes and the main body of the text. However, at places he neglects interacting with up-to-date sources. For example, one of his major goals is bringing historical inquiry and perspective of faith together. He could have discussed Anthony Le Donne's (*The Historiographical Jesus: Memory, Typology, and the Son of David* [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009]) application of social memory theory to historical Jesus research. Le Donne focuses on historiographical inquiry that still takes hermeneutics seriously. He further notes that when social memory is applied in both respects (personal memory and commemoration) to the Gospels, one can expect results that shed light both on how Jesus was initially remembered and how these memories contributed to his commemoration in

early Christianity. Secondly, McDonald's description of the criteria of authenticity is not complete because he does not mention three new criteria associated with the Greek language and linguistics suggested by Stanley E. Porter (*The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals* [JSNTSup, 191; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000], pp. 126-237): 'Greek language and its context', 'Greek textual variance' and 'discourse features'.

McDonald concludes his book with the assertion that 'Christian faith has been greatly enhanced through historical inquiry, since the Christian proclamation is inextricably bound to both history and theology, and in the Church's Scriptures God's activity in Jesus of Nazareth is connected to both' (p. 343). His book is primarily written for non-specialist readers—students, pastors and educated laypersons. His primary focus in this book is to tell the story of Jesus within the context of faith, while not neglecting the lingering critical issues. He places his book within the so-called third quest for the historical Jesus, as he affirms the historical credibility of the biblical story of Jesus. McDonald, on one hand, endorses the historians' inquiry into Jesus' life and on the other hand declares their inability to affirm the claims of the community of faith about Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God. He attempts to bridge the gap between faith and historical inquiry and suggests that they in fact complement each other. I would recommend this book to seminary students, pastors and Christian apologists.

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