

The arguments of the 'mythicists' about the late dating of the earliest manuscripts are countered by careful historical investigation of the internal evidence for the dating of the Gospels. As in his earlier books Casey pays special attention to Aramaic traces important for the interpretation of the early text. The absence of coins, inscriptions or literary traces of Jesus should not cause concern in such a historical context. He also takes issue with the mythicists' arguments from silence, either G. A. Wells's past claim that the Pauline epistles do not contain enough, or any, material about the historical Jesus, or the more recent arguments about what is not in the Gospels (such as a sketch of Jesus' appearance or character). 'The most extraordinary form of this argument goes in from what is not found in Q' ('Kloppenborg's version of these entirely hypothetical documents'), drawing 'dramatic conclusions from the absence of things from "documents" which did not exist until modern scholars invented them' (p. 109).

It remains to ask whether Casey's argument would prove more successful if the language had been more temperate, with fewer accusations of incompetence and spuriousness, and some restraint in his repetitiousness and echoing of the blogging style of his opponents.

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Chris Keith, ***Jesus against the Scribal Elite: The Origins of the Conflict***, Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, 2014; 208 pp.: 9780801039881, £13.52/\$22.99 (pbk)

In this final piece of his three-part research project on the literacy of Jesus, Chris Keith brings the fruit of his research to a non-specialist audience while also seeking to advance the argument of his earlier works. The main argument of this volume is that Jesus' status as a teacher and his conflict with the religious authorities were interrelated. Keith contends that Jesus was probably not a scribal literate teacher, though the way he taught often gave outsiders the opposite impression. This brought Jesus into direct conflict with the religious elite, who not only possessed scribal literacy but also knew that he did not, and therefore sought to discredit him on that basis. The introductory chapter sets the agenda for the book by suggesting that the controversy between Jesus and the religious elite, rather than being a literary fiction, is rooted in a historical conflict. Keith notes that the historical nature of this controversy is often overlooked by scholars. Chapter 1 looks at different levels of literacy against the backdrop of perceptions about teachers in antiquity. In particular, Keith highlights six factors that demonstrate the complexity of literacy and the scribal culture during Jesus' time: majority illiteracy, degrees of literacy, reading and writing as separate skills, multilingualism, scribal literacy and social perception of literacy. In Chapter 2, Keith demonstrates how the New Testament disagrees about Jesus' literacy. Whereas Mark and Matthew depict rejections of Jesus' scribal literate status (Mark 6.3/Matt. 13.55), John has audiences

question his scribal literacy (John 7.15), while Luke clearly presents him as a scribal literate teacher (Luke 4 and elsewhere). What are we to make of this disparity? This is where the book takes a more scholarly turn. Chapter 3 covers the history of Jesus studies, while Chapter 4 builds the historical case that Jesus did not hold scribal literacy. Both of these chapters cover material that might prove to be too heavy for some non-specialist readers. This is not so much a critique of Keith's writing style but an observation that some of the material covered in these chapters may be difficult to understand for those without academic training. Chapter 5 considers the position of all four Gospels that the root of the conflict between Jesus and the religious elite centred on the related issues of Scripture and authority. If Jesus was not able to read the Scriptures, how could he have authority as a teacher? The argument of Chapter 6 draws the foregoing chapters to a close by arguing that the origin of the conflict between Jesus and the religious elite over Scripture and authority is rooted in history and should be taken seriously by those researching Jesus. A brief concluding chapter summarizes the book and raises a few prospects for future research. This book is engaging, well written, well researched, and contains numerous useful teaching illustrations (see various explanations on pp. 106–7, 118, 121 and 133). I highly recommend it for non-specialist readers, teachers and scholars. Chris Keith has done a service by making his important research available to a wider audience.

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Catrin Williams and Christopher Rowland (eds), ***John's Gospel and Intimations of Apocalyptic***, Bloomsbury T&T Clark: London and New York, 2013; 344 pp.: 9780567618528, £70.00/\$120.00 (hbk), 9780567119100, £22.99/\$34.95 (pbk)

Apocalyptic literature is characterized by the disclosure of mysteries. A visionary may learn about the course of history or perhaps travel to the heavenly realms above. But John's Gospel has little of this. It narrates the ministry of Jesus on earth and emphasizes salvation in the present rather than the future. John Ashton, however, has described John's Gospel as an apocalypse in reverse, because it depicts revelation of heavenly realities on earth, through a revealer who not only speaks the message but also incarnates it.

This welcome collection of essays explores Ashton's proposal. The essays in Part 1 deal with 'Intimations of Apocalyptic' in John by focusing on the central question of revelation. A significant point is that apocalypses themselves show revelation taking place in various ways. They are concerned that heavenly secrets be disseminated to an earthly audience, not only to the visionary himself. Since the Johannine Jesus comes from above to bear witness to a God whom no one has ever seen, John might be called an apocalyptic gospel. Moreover, apocalypses sometimes work with a two-stage approach to