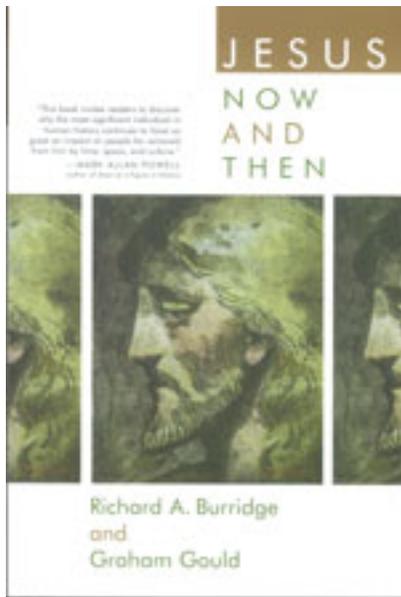


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Burridge, Richard A., and Graham Gould

Jesus Now and Then

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In *Jesus Now and Then*, Richard Burridge and Graham Gould have produced a readable and useful introduction to Christianity for thoughtful persons of all faiths not inclined to the academic study of the New Testament and Christian theology. The book is derived from a series of lectures at King's College at London University for those not studying theology but wishing to earn the popular Associate qualification (AKC). Scholars in New Testament studies will be familiar with Burridge's work in the canonical Gospels, and those in patristics will know of Gould's work particularly on Egyptian monasticism and the Cappadocian Fathers; these specializations naturally shine through the present work. On the whole, the book could be described as uneven in perspective, content, and style, though certainly adequate for an introductory volume such as this.

The book opens with a brief prologue that serves to describe the original context and history of the Associate lectures, as well as the transformation of these lectures into the present book. Following this, chapter 1 ("Jesus Now and Then") orients the reader to the topics to be discussed in the book by emphasizing the ongoing significance of Jesus as related to his past significance.

The first major section of the book, written by Burridge, focuses on the New Testament. Chapter 2 ("The Historical Jesus") introduces historical Jesus studies—including a

history of Gospels scholarship and Jesus “quests” and a description of canonical and noncanonical sources for Jesus studies—and concludes with a summary historical reconstruction of Jesus’ life and teachings. Chapter 3 (“Jesus in the Gospels”) is certainly Burrige’s best one, which is not surprising to any familiar with his other work. He focuses first on the genre of the Gospels, providing a good summary of his *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, then looks at each Gospel’s unique theological portrait of Jesus, summarizing key ideas from his *Four Gospels, One Jesus?* Chapter 4 (“Jesus and Paul”) provides a solid introduction to Pauline studies, exploring pre-Pauline (especially christological) traditions, an introductory survey of Paul’s life and letters, and significant, currently much-discussed features of Paul’s thought, such as the law and justification, Christology, eschatology, being “in Christ,” and ecclesiology. Chapter 5 (“New Testament Views of Jesus”) concludes the first section with a survey of New Testament Christologies, an attempt to discern Jesus’ own self-understanding through these various perspectives, and a strong assertion of the unity of the New Testament christological portraits in the midst of their clear diversity.

The second section is written by Gould and focuses on the early church through to Nicea and Chalcedon. Chapter 6 (“The Early Church and the Teaching of Jesus”) discusses the use of Jesus’ moral teaching in the church fathers of the second and third centuries, including a good treatment of the context of these individuals and an illustrative focus on Justin, Origen, and *2 Clement*. Chapter 7 (“Jesus in Early Christian Worship”) brings together some of Gould’s special research interests, examining the most significant sources for early Christian worship as to their perspectives on key features of this worship: daily prayer, baptism, the Eucharist, and so on. Chapter 8 (“Jesus—Divine and Human”) provides more traditional fare in discussions of patristic theology, exploring in some detail the historical background to the fourth- and fifth-century theological formulations of the doctrines of the Trinity and the person of Christ. The final chapter (“Modern Understandings of Jesus”) then leaps forward to post-Enlightenment discussions of these doctrines, providing both “liberal” and “conservative” current perspectives particularly on Christology.

A short epilogue concludes the book proper, restating the introductory questions and ideas of the first chapter. The final element of the book is a selection of “References and Further Reading,” an annotated bibliography of a few current works related to each of the book’s chapters. There are no indexes.

With regard to style and format, while the first half is generally more engaging and interactive than the second, the entire work is well-written and readable for its intended audience. The formatting is easy on the eye, and the editing is also well done—only one editorial omission caught my eye, the reference to “a example” (125). One prominent and

noteworthy feature of the book is frequent text boxes that define technical terms, provide illustrative passages from primary sources, present relevant quotes from current scholars, and so on. These are usually (though not always) placed in appropriate locations in the text, related to something in the immediate context, but not in an intrusive way that breaks the flow of the text. It would, however, be helpful to have a complete glossary of the terms collected together at the end of the book for easy reference. On a related note, the absence of any index is disappointing, and the book's usefulness would be enhanced by at least subject and primary source indexes.

There are a few unusual comments and even errors in the book. Relatively insignificant examples of participation in common errors include the statement that "Notionally of course Jesus was born in the year 0" (1), when in fact 1 B.C. (B.C.E.) was immediately followed by A.D. 1 (C.E.), and the assertion that Paul "fell off his horse" during his Damascus road experience (82), when none of the biblical accounts asserts this. These may seem trivial observations, but some may question the reliability of the book's information in larger matters when there is demonstrable unreliability in such smaller matters. Perhaps a more significant example is the strange and even problematic characterization of the Jesus Seminar and J. D. Crossan's work as the "Californian approach" to historical Jesus studies, producing a "Californian" Jesus (32).

It is inevitable and understandable that crucial scholarly discussions will be ignored or downplayed in a book such as this. The informed reader will see the views of specific scholars and the residue of scholarly debates throughout the book, though these are rarely acknowledged. Generally speaking, the second half of the book is more explicitly sensitive to these scholarly discussions than the first, though still individual scholars are seldom referenced. The "References and Further Reading" section at the end of the book addresses this lacuna to a certain extent, but this section could be expanded and the particular issues raised in the book more directly tied to the specific works highlighted in this section.

There is a noticeable difference in theological orientation, or at least presentation, between the two halves of the book. The first half generally presents a relatively conservative approach to the topics. For instance, the summary reconstruction of Jesus' life and teaching is based upon a strong sense of the Gospels' historical reliability and presents a view of Jesus thoroughly compatible with current conservative Christianity (38–46). Many readers may not be as optimistic as Burridge that such a reconstruction can be built from what is "reasonably certain" about Jesus and his context; indeed, one may wonder what the connection is between this reconstruction and the previous discussion of historical-critical approaches to Jesus and the Gospels. As another example, Burridge draws on Acts as a historical source for Paul's life without any acknowledgment

of the debates surrounding such an endeavor (77–78; note the text box giving “Facts about Paul from the Biblical Accounts”). By contrast, the second half generally offers a more centrist approach, or at least one that acknowledges a variety of perspectives on issues. For example, Gould takes care in describing the “orthodoxy” and “heresy” of the first Christian centuries, acknowledging the charge that such labels more accurately reflect patristic political influence than theological correctness (especially 157–58, 174). Or, as another example already noted, current Christology is discussed by presenting both “liberal” and “conservative” perspectives (189–203).

In conclusion, there are certainly more thorough presentations of individual research on the topics addressed in the book (e.g., L. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity*), more focused introductions to current scholarship on a particular topic (e.g., D. Horrell, *An Introduction to the Study of Paul*), and more comprehensive guides to the direct study of a particular topic (e.g., G. Theissen and A. Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*). However, such is not the purpose of this book. This book has the advantage of providing a broader scope as an introduction to Christianity, bringing together introductory perspectives on a wide range of disciplines that are more often kept separate: historical Jesus and Gospels studies, Pauline studies, New Testament theology, early church history, patristic theology, and even Christianity in contemporary culture. While some will no doubt be put off by the more conservative perspective of the book’s first half, or the general absence of acknowledgment of key scholars or debates on these topics, the book fulfills its general purpose admirably, introducing key features of a historical Christianity for the intelligent reader not inclined toward the academic study of Christian thought. If the book in fact inspires such readers to a more rigorous study of its topics, it will have surpassed its own expectations.