

The Historical Jesus in the Twentieth Century 1900-1950, by Walter P. Weaver. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999. Pp. 449.*

The author, emeritus professor of religion at Florida Southern College, here presents us with the first volume in a projected trilogy that will also cover the years 1951-80 (Ernst Baasland) and 1981 through the end of the century (James Charlesworth). Weaver takes his cue from the sixth edition of Albert Schweitzer's famous work on historical Jesus research (1913) in which Schweitzer wrote that he in the future would leave it to others to introduce "order into the chaos of modern lives of Jesus."

At the very outset of his volume, Weaver notes several problems with Schweitzer's presentation. The most important limitation was Schweitzer's almost entire focus on German scholarship, which left one with the impression that only Germans were seriously engaged in Jesus research. This was not true in Schweitzer's day, and it is even less true today. Also, Weaver plausibly contends that the customary way of presenting Jesus research as "Old Quest -- No Quest -- New Quest -- Third Quest" or the like is unduly reductionistic.

This is not the place to discuss the great wealth of material amassed by Weaver in detail. In the end, there is no substitute for reading through this enlightening, stimulating volume. Suffice it to say that at many points Weaver makes a genuine contribution to a better understanding of the history of scholarship on Jesus. What is especially valuable is that he provides information about little-known contributors and thus fills out lacunae in conventional presentations of Jesus research. I therefore commend the present work and look forward with anticipation to subsequent volumes in this series.

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