



# The Proverbs of Jesus: Issues of History and Rhetoric (The Library of New Testament Studies)

*Alan Winton*

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Was Jesus a prophet of the eschatological Kingdom or a teacher of wisdom? These two characterizations of Jesus appear to be incompatible and, since the last century, the former has dominated our understanding of the Gospels at the expense of the latter. Proverbial sayings in the Synoptics have either been pressed into the service of eschatology-and have thus lost their character as wisdom-or have been disregarded as 'inauthentic', representing a later stage in the tradition. This book offers a critique of the method of historical reconstruction which leads to such conclusions. It also suggests an approach to the rhetoric or function of proverbial sayings, based on pragmatics, which develops the distinction between sense and force and offers some account of the rhetorical strategies involved in the use of proverbs in speech. A final chapter attempts to show how proverbial sayings might be given more significance in our understanding of Jesus' message through a reconsideration of the relationship between wisdom, eschatology and the Kingdom of God.

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