

Warren Carter, *Telling Tales about Jesus. An Introduction to the New Testament Gospels*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press ([www.fortresspress.com](http://www.fortresspress.com)), 2016. Pages, xii + 291. Paper, \$39.00.

Carter, professor of New Testament at Brite Divinity School, writes explicitly for the beginning college or graduate student who is embarking on a serious study of the gospels. His opening segment defines the literary genre of a gospel by a close comparison with the literary genre of ancient biography. He then turns to the development of the traditions about Jesus between his death and the composition of the gospels. The bulk of the volume is a two-stage analysis of each gospel—first recounting the specific narrative and then fitting the distinctive features of each gospel into its probable social and religious context. A concluding chapter provides a well-balanced discussion of the formation of the canon and the scholarship devoted to the quest for the historical Jesus. Carter's perspective throughout is theologically neutral and even handed, certainly allowing openings for either a religious studies or theological interpretation of the texts. Most unfortunate, in my view, is the choice of the title for this otherwise helpful work. "Telling Tales" in my experience conjures up the idea of gossip or pure fiction—a view of the gospels that this carefully crafted textbook does not hold.